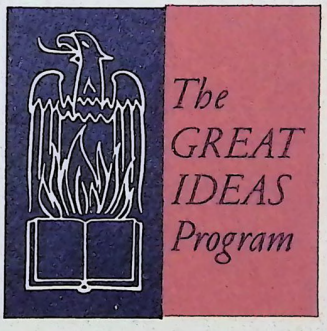

FAMILY PARTICIPATION PLAN

for reading and discussing
the *Great Books of the Western World*

Family participation plan

The Great Ideas Program

Family participation plan

for reading and discussing the *Great Books of the Western World*

A program of enjoyment and enlightenment

for leisure-time hours *in the home*—designed for you

and your children* *together*

With a set of Reading Guides prepared under

the supervision of Dr. Mortimer J. Adler,

Editor of "The Great Ideas," A Syntopicon—

and special introductions by Dr. Robert M. Hutchins,

Editor in Chief, *Great Books of the Western World*

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* Reading Guide I: For parents with seventh- and eighth-grade children.

* Reading Guide II: For parents with high-school freshmen and sophomores.

* Reading Guide III: For parents with high-school juniors and seniors.

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A confidential memorandum

To: Parents of young people

From: Robert Maynard Hutchins, Editor in Chief

Great Books of the Western World

In re: Being educated by your children

Yours is a literate home because you are literate people. And you are literate people not only because you read great books, but also because you are interested in great ideas. Literacy, of course, involves far more than merely the ability to read and write. Many people are not literate, in the full sense of the word, who can read and write very well. The kind of literacy that means something, however, is the kind that produces intelligent thought and action.

It is this kind of literacy that you want your children to have. Unfortunately, their chances of acquiring it in the schools today are small and may become still smaller if schools become more and more narrowly technical and vocational.

Of course the true vocation of a man or woman should be the intelligent use of freedom, and, as a matter of fact, our survival depends upon this voca-

tion. So does the happiness of each individual. It appears quite certain, then, that if your children are to be educated for freedom and its enjoyment, their education must be substantially aided and abetted by their parents. Remember, children go to school, but they come back home.

This is one of the prime reasons for your ownership of Great Books and your enrollment in the Great Ideas Program. Certainly other sets of books are decorative, and you might have purchased them. But you didn't buy just books. Instead you bought a family home education program that will effectively help you to have a literate home environment for the care and formation of literate children.

You may well think that you cannot educate your own children. My parents thought that they could not educate theirs, and I often think that I cannot educate mine. But parents can educate themselves, and children are always willing to help educate their parents. This Family Participation Plan tells you how to involve your children in your education. What you must remember is that your children cannot help to educate you without learning something themselves in the process. It may sound like an underhanded trick to play on your own flesh and blood, but the result will be an education for all concerned. That is the purpose of this Plan.

A *very* confidential memorandum

To: Young people with parents

From: Robert Maynard Hutchins, Editor in Chief

Great Books of the Western World

In re: Educating your parents

This is a conspiracy to get you to do some reading and thinking. It is based on the assumption that you believe you don't like books, and this assumption is false. You may not like the books that you have been given to read. They are mostly textbooks, and often textbooks are not good books. As yet you probably haven't had a chance to learn how interesting good books can be.

Your parents are now enrolled in the Great Ideas Program and are proud owners of the Great Books - the best books ever written. They have every intention of reading them. (They read some of them when they were your age, and one of the sure signs of a great book is that one who has read it wants to re-read it.) The trouble is that your parents may insist that they have no time. You can help them by making them take time to read these books. Of course you must play a little trick on them, for the way to help is to make them read and discuss the books with you.

This is the kind of program that you will enjoy participating in, and these are the kind of books you will enjoy reading. Also, this Plan and its accompanying Personal Consultation Service will answer practically any questions your parents may ask that you can't answer. Don't be afraid to use these services.

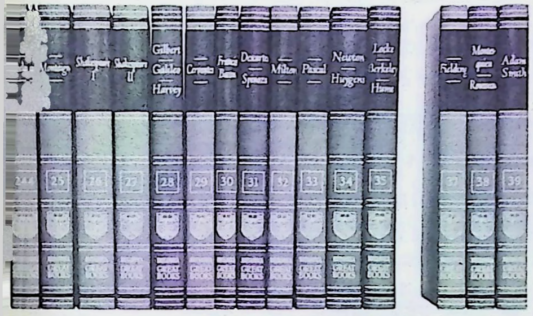
One thing is sure. These are readings that you will benefit from all the rest of your lives - just as young people have done for hundreds of years before you. These are not the easiest books you have ever read; but I can assure you that they are the most interesting.

I know you are busy. But you will be even busier later on. Take my advice - don't wait.

Your teachers cannot make you wise - much as they would like to - because these books are seldom read in school. You will have to help yourselves, and here is one chance to do so. The world is going to belong to you, but it is a hard world. You will need to know everything you can to get along and to understand at least some of it. Through this Plan and the Great Ideas Program, the wisdom of the world lies open to you - just waiting for you to tap it. I envy you.

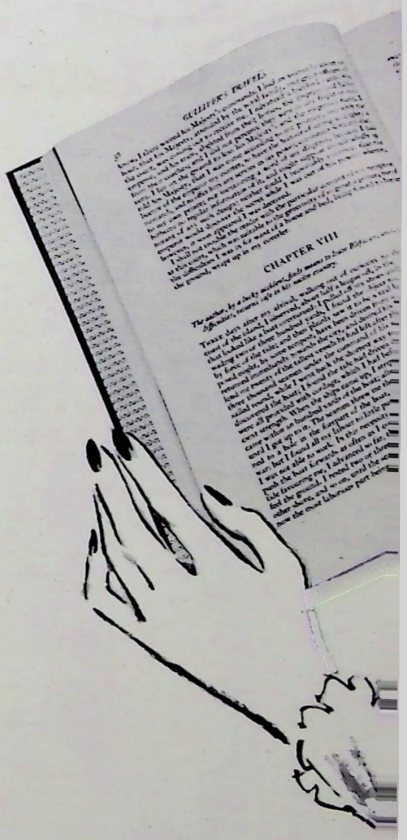
The Great Ideas
A SYNTOPICON
I
Angel to Lens
The Great Ideas
A SYNTOPICON
II
Man to World
Aeschylus
Sophocles
Euripides
Aristophanes
Herodotus
Thucydides
Plato
Aristotle
I
Aristotle
II
Virgil
Plutarch
Ptolemy
Copernicus
Kepler
Plotinus
Augustine
Thomas Aquinas
I
Thomas Aquinas
II
Gilbert
I
Gilbert
II
Kant
Boswell
Lavoisier
Fourier
Faraday
Hegel
Goethe
Melville
Dostoyevsky
Marx
Tolstoy
Dostoevsky
William James
Freud

ONE



Family participation

Let's participate!



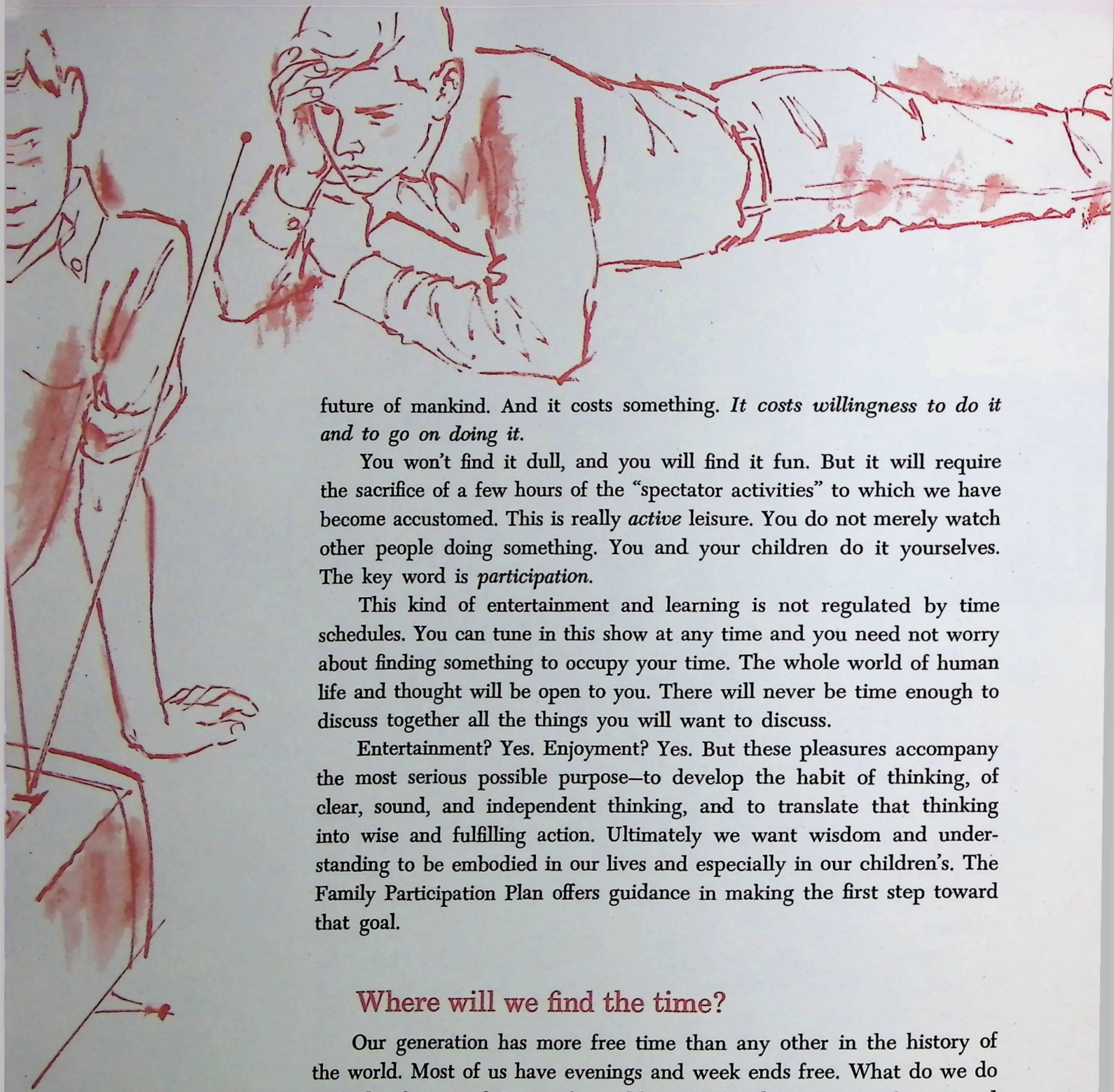
The Great Ideas Program and the *Great Books* are yours. This Family Participation Plan is a way of introducing your children to them—and of using them yourselves. Through this Plan your family will experience the joy of learning and thus make a truly human use of the leisure time our economy has given us.

Technology has given us the blessing that democracy requires—***time to think***. The world of thought is ours for the taking. Only through its conquest can we master the material world, here or in outer space.

Books not read and ideas not assimilated are useless. Other men's wisdom does not become ours by being on our shelves. Our ultimate goal is not the passive absorption of other men's wisdom, but the development of our own.

The Great Ideas Program Family Plan aids parents and children to make pleasant and rewarding use of their free time together. The home is not a school with required studies, grades, and diplomas. In the Family Plan the parents are not the children's teachers, but fellow adventurers, fellow explorers. Parents and children together push back the frontier that never ends—the frontier of knowledge.

This is a lifetime activity, not a passing pleasure. The Family Plan calls for a spiritual investment in the future of your children, who are the



future of mankind. And it costs something. *It costs willingness to do it and to go on doing it.*

You won't find it dull, and you will find it fun. But it will require the sacrifice of a few hours of the "spectator activities" to which we have become accustomed. This is really *active* leisure. You do not merely watch other people doing something. You and your children do it yourselves. The key word is *participation.*

This kind of entertainment and learning is not regulated by time schedules. You can tune in this show at any time and you need not worry about finding something to occupy your time. The whole world of human life and thought will be open to you. There will never be time enough to discuss together all the things you will want to discuss.

Entertainment? Yes. Enjoyment? Yes. But these pleasures accompany the most serious possible purpose—to develop the habit of thinking, of clear, sound, and independent thinking, and to translate that thinking into wise and fulfilling action. Ultimately we want wisdom and understanding to be embodied in our lives and especially in our children's. The Family Participation Plan offers guidance in making the first step toward that goal.

Where will we find the time?

Our generation has more free time than any other in the history of the world. Most of us have evenings and week ends free. What do we do with this free time? Some of us add to the family income with a second or third job. Others participate in social activities, of a serious or frivolous nature. We keep ourselves busy.

But all of us, even those who "moonlight" it with an extra job or two, have time for diversions. What are our diversions like? Well, sometimes we do something active, like playing ball or hunting or boating. But most of the time we're spectators. Our most popular sports are spectator sports. We watch other people using their bodies. Worse yet, we may sit in our living rooms watching or listening to the game. We miss even the fresh air and sunshine and jumping up and down in the stands.

And what do we do with our minds? We turn on the radio or TV and lean back waiting to be entertained. When we're not, we switch impatiently to another program. Or we go out to the movies, to lean back again and passively watch and listen. If worst comes to worst we may stay home and read—the Sunday supplements, comic strips, picture magazines, or digests of articles and books—anything to kill the time—the time of our lives.

Now, of course, these diversions are not harmful in themselves. As temporary distractions, to release us from the fatigue and tension of hard work, they are all right. It is when they take up all our free time that they become unwholesome. Amusements that simply pass the time do not nourish us, do not help us to grow as human beings. Active contact with the great minds of the ages can help us to grow—both parents and children.

We have the Great Ideas Program.

We have *Great Books.*

We have the time.

Let's fill it, not kill it.

The family and the school

This Plan is not meant to take the place of the school, but to supplement it. Tell your child's teacher that you are using this Plan. The teacher will undoubtedly be glad to hear about it. And your child may be able to obtain extra credit for written work based on the Family Plan or to substitute it for required compositions or book reports. Many of the readings will be directly related to the material your child is studying in class. Modify the reading schedule, whenever your child's teacher thinks it wise, in order not to conflict with or duplicate the regular curriculum.

You will notice that our Plan is directed to children from the seventh grade to the fourth year of high school, that is, to those between twelve and eighteen years of age. The reason we have done this is that the learning habits and attitudes of children are molded during this age span. It is hard to stimulate intellectual interest before this period, and we face a serious problem if we have not awakened the child's mind before it ends. It is our responsibility as parents to see that our children do not grow up with sleeping minds. The Family Participation Plan is designed to awaken their minds—and ours—and to keep them awake.

Parents and children

Parents and children learn together under the Family Participation Plan. The parents are not teachers who know the answers. Sometimes they do not even know what the questions are. They learn what the questions are and try to get at the answers through doing the readings with their children. There is mutual and fruitful communication between parents and children. Both learn from each other's responses to the readings. This is an unusual role for the parent, and he must learn not to impose his authority here, as he does when correcting the child's behavior. The parent must be tactful and open-minded in guiding the family's participation.

We can help our children in the learning process wherever our maturity, our greater experience of life, may contribute. Some of the ideas and problems that arise may seem rather abstract and empty to them. We can make such issues come alive by bringing up real-life situations and decisions we have had to face. These discussions will provide us with a rare opportunity to pass on to our children some of the practical wisdom we have learned from life.

But our children, too, can help us to learn. They contribute their freshness (in more ways than one), their wonder, their keen curiosity, their constant inquiry into "Why?" "What?" and "How?" They will not be as inclined as we are to take conventional, unexamined answers as right and to consider the question closed. Their minds have not yet been dulled by custom and habitual responses. They can help us, by their example, to open up our own minds again and recapture some of that old vigor from our long-lost youth.

Remember, the actual teachers in the Family Participation Plan are the authors of the *Great Books*. The parents bring their children and themselves to learn from these great teachers. And in the discussion the great teachers arouse the parents and the children to learn mutually from one another.

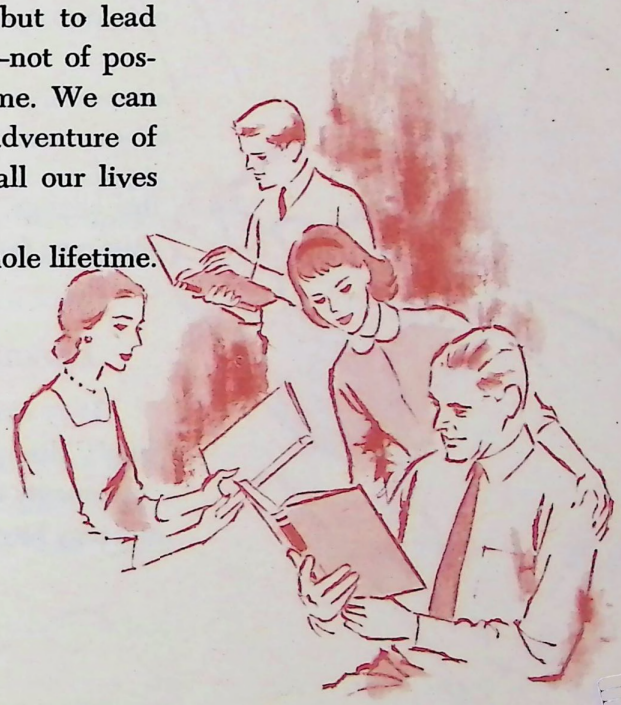
Lifelong learning

How long do these classes with the great teachers continue? All your life long, and throughout your children's lives, if you and they are willing. The *Great Books* bear endless rereading. And we have included only a small portion of them in the Plan. You and your children can continue on with the much longer list of readings found in the Appendix. As your children go on through college they will be able to grasp more and more of

the *Great Books*. They can draw a whole lifetime of thought, understanding, and enjoyment from this set. You should also call their attention to the Ten-Year Reading Plan in Volume 1 of the set, as well as to the special Reading Plans that are soon to be published.

One thing more. The end of all this study and thought is life—a deep, full life. The end is not to accumulate abstract knowledge, but to lead rich, human lives. (A rich life is a matter of being and doing—not of possessions.) This kind of wealth cannot be stored up at one time. We can have it only by giving ourselves up, again and again, to the adventure of learning, considering anew, evaluating anew, thinking anew all our lives long.

This is a lifetime quest. Its full fruits can come only in a whole lifetime.



TWO

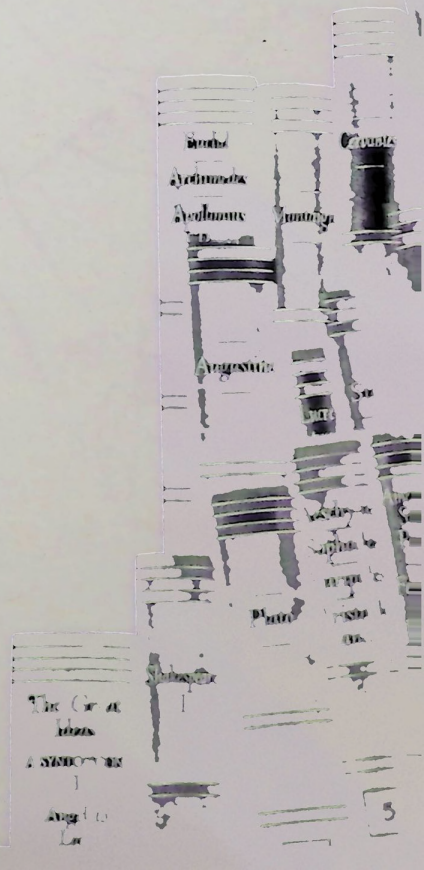
How to do it

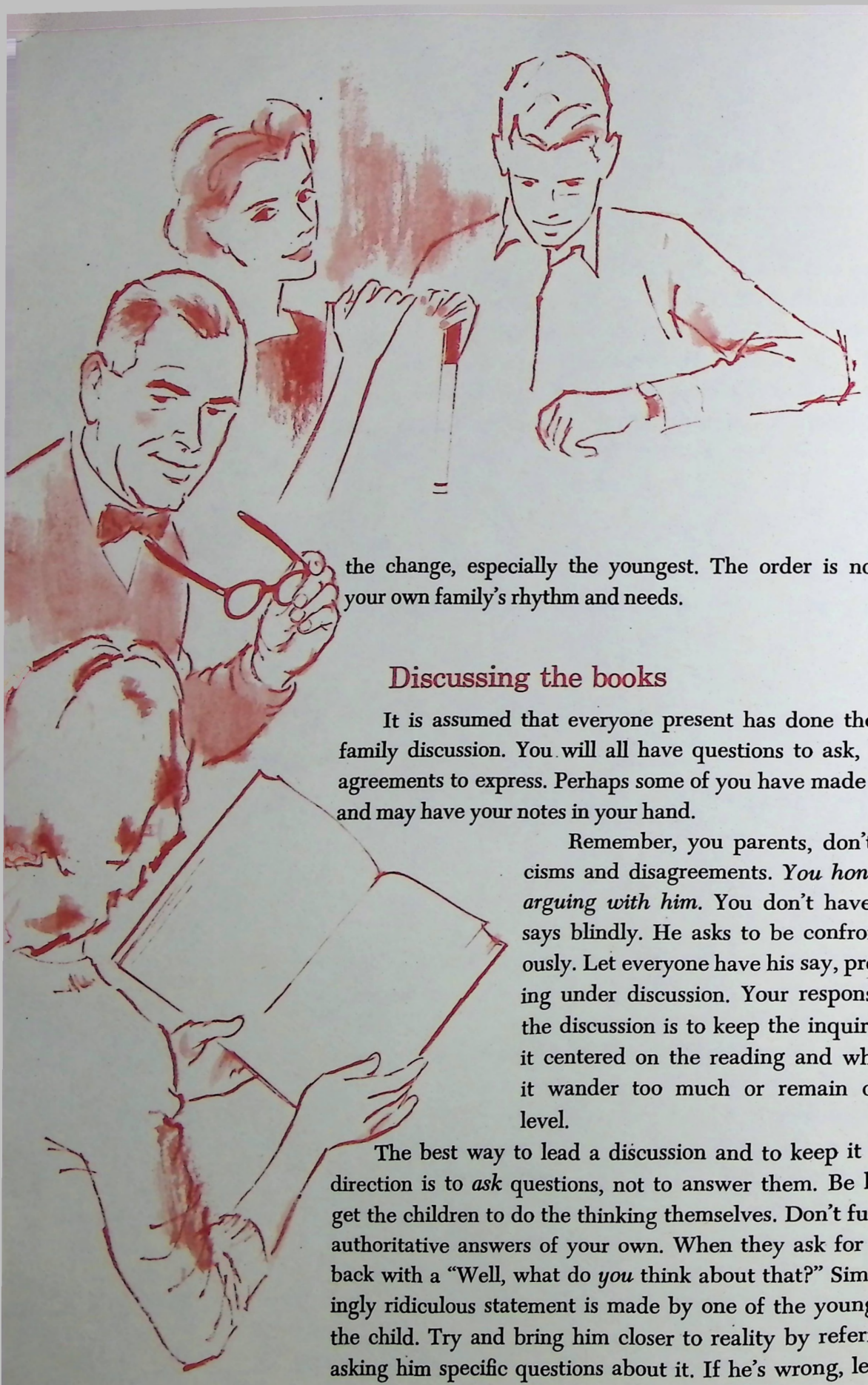
Reading the books

Remember, you need not be rigid about reading lists or time schedules. This is a family enterprise, so you can tailor the requirements to fit every member who is participating. Try not to leave anyone out. If you consider a certain reading beyond the level of your twelve-year-old boy or girl, substitute another reading. Or if your child is exceptionally bright, you may start with readings at the older age level. Be flexible.

Give each member of the family plenty of time to do the readings. The assignments are short, but it is best to read them carefully and more than once. You have the *Great Books* set at home, so you don't have to go elsewhere to find the readings. Set your own intervals between the readings, and vary the interval if conditions require it. Twice a week, once a week, once every two weeks—whatever is convenient. Just see that everyone has an opportunity to do the reading.

We list the readings in this Guide in the historical order in which they were written. You need not read them in that order. If you think it better for your seventh and eighth graders to read the Declaration of Independence first instead of last, go ahead. Just get all the members to agree with





the change, especially the youngest. The order is not important. Follow your own family's rhythm and needs.

Discussing the books

It is assumed that everyone present has done the reading before the family discussion. You will all have questions to ask, agreements and disagreements to express. Perhaps some of you have made notes on the reading and may have your notes in your hand.

Remember, you parents, don't shush up the criticisms and disagreements. *You honor a great writer by arguing with him.* You don't have to accept what he says blindly. He asks to be confronted and taken seriously. Let everyone have his say, pro or con, on the reading under discussion. Your responsibility as leaders of the discussion is to keep the inquiry going and to keep it centered on the reading and what it says. Don't let it wander too much or remain on a trivial or silly level.

The best way to lead a discussion and to keep it moving in the right direction is to *ask* questions, not to answer them. Be like Socrates. Try to get the children to do the thinking themselves. Don't furnish them with flat, authoritative answers of your own. When they ask for such answers, come back with a "Well, what do *you* think about that?" Similarly, when a seemingly ridiculous statement is made by one of the youngsters, don't squelch the child. Try and bring him closer to reality by referring to the text and asking him specific questions about it. If he's wrong, let him find it out for himself (with your aid). Or, you can always direct the question to another child, and let the children hassle it out among themselves (short of physical violence).

Remember, you don't have to settle the questions these readings raise. These are the great questions which don't have a simple "Yes" or "No" answer. They have been in men's minds for centuries, even for thousands of years. Your aim is to make the children aware of these questions, to get them really interested in them, and to develop their minds through considering them.

Above all, let there be nothing grim or forced about the discussion. You can be serious without being glum. You are doing this because you want to, not because you have to. A discussion should be exciting and enjoyable. The participants should be eager and enthusiastic. When the atmosphere gets heavy or strained, lighten it with a jest. If people are getting a bit tired, break off the discussion until another day, or take time out for a snack.

Outside helps

Try to keep things simple. Don't get cluttered up with too many extra materials. Remember, the readings and the discussion are the main elements of the Plan. You can proceed on these without anything but your *Great Books* set.

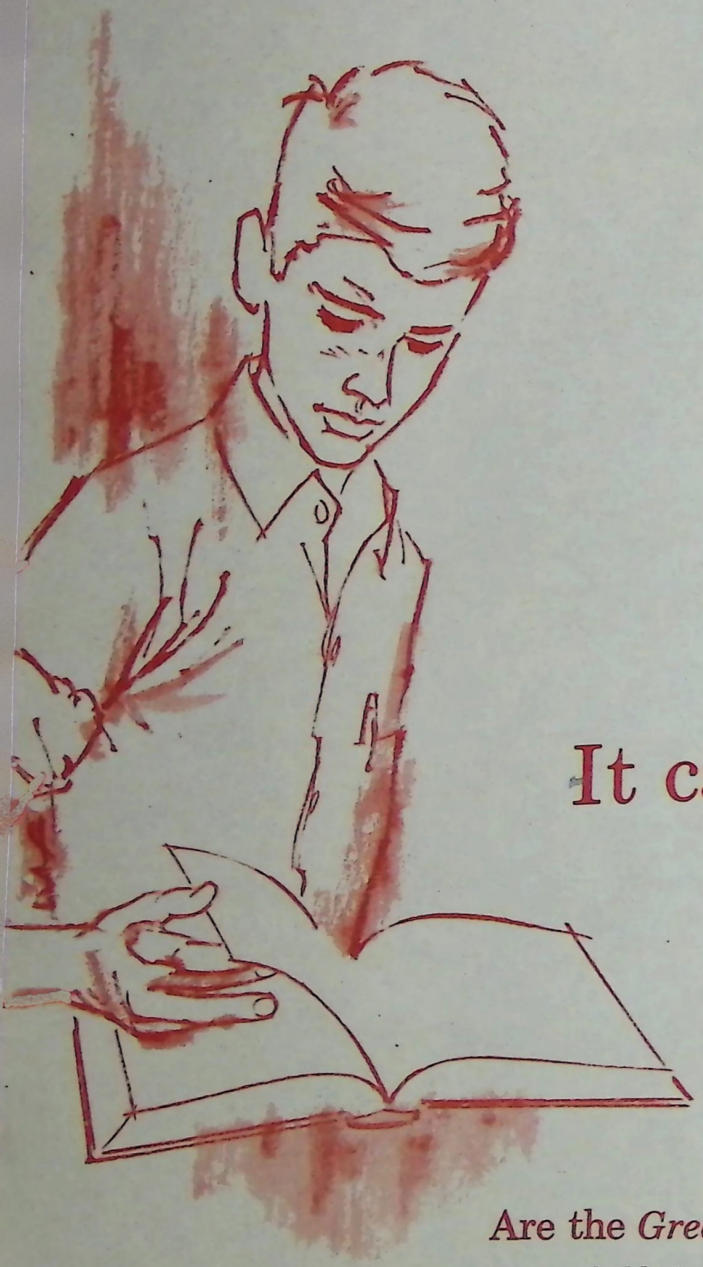
However, these materials and services may prove helpful, when certain questions arise:

(*a*) An unabridged or large abridged dictionary, to look up unfamiliar words, names, and terms.

(*b*) A good encyclopaedia, to find answers to historical or biographical questions. (Don't waste too much time looking up these details. You can usually discuss the ideas without knowing much about the historical background.)

(*c*) The Personal Consultation Service will give you further readings and guidance as outlined on the back of your certificate. Just write to: Personal Consultation Service, Great Ideas Program, 425 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago 11, Illinois. Tell them what your problem is or the topic you want to explore and give the ages of the children participating.

(*d*) Use the Syntopicon—Volumes 2 and 3 of your own *Great Books* set—when you want to explore a certain idea, say "Family," "War and Peace," "Love," or "Justice." Have a parent or an older child read the introductory essay on the idea and take responsibility for leading the discussion. You might even discuss some of the passages listed under the References. Learn to use your Syntopicon and teach the children how to use it when they get older.



THREE

It can be done

Are the *Great Books* too hard for children?

You probably know that the works selected for inclusion in the *Great Books* set were chosen because they speak to all men at all times about the basic questions that concern them: the nature of the world, man's place in it, leading a good life, communion with God or the gods, achieving a good society, and other perennial problems. Another requirement for inclusion in the set was that the works be well written, that they should communicate fluently what they had to say to people who were willing to make the effort to understand. Of course, it was not expected that these works should communicate all that they had to say in one quick reading. Rather it was required that they should bear constant rereading and communicate more and more meaning the more often they were read.

"Well, all right," you may say, "this sounds fine for grownups, for mature, experienced persons; but how about the kids? Aren't the Great Books *too hard for children?"*

In the first place, it is a historical fact that many of the works in the Great Books *set were the core of studies for school children a century ago.* True, this benefited only a small social class. The Family Participation Plan is designed to make these works available to all children.

Secondly, children in many schools read and benefit from these books today. They do not find them too hard to read.

Of course, great books require a real exercise of the child's mind. They make him stretch his intelligence and imagination. His mind must develop beyond the stage where it was before he started reading the books. But they are not (in our carefully graded selections) beyond his grasp if he reaches out for them. They offer a challenge. Children like to have a challenge. They like to show how well they can do in a new activity.

It is up to us parents to see that our children get started right in their reading habits and attitudes. If we let them get used to so-called easy-reading books with bright, colored pictures when they are adolescents, they will be reluctant later on to make the necessary effort to read good books. They will accept worthless pap instead of going after good, solid food for their minds. This would be as unhealthy as feeding their bodies entirely on synthetic, highly advertised breakfast foods, made up of wind, water, and artificial flavoring.

They *can* read the *Great Books* if you will let them, if you will encourage them.

The Family Participation Plan shows how.

Why these particular readings?

We have chosen excerpts from important works which we think will be of interest and benefit both to children and to adults. Let's look at the list of readings.

Our first group, for seventh and eighth graders, starts with the gripping story of the journeys of Odysseus. The plot alone will be exciting to young and old alike. The children's imaginations will be stirred, and the parents will see in it the perilous journey of every man through life. This story has not lost its appeal in 3,000 years. The whole family can enjoy it and learn from it.

Next we go to the Book of Proverbs, long one of the most popular books of the Bible, for its practical wisdom on how to lead a good life. Then we

dip into the writings of the master historian Herodotus, telling us his fascinating stories about ancient Egypt and Persia. We have selected them because they are interesting to all ages.

In our next reading we come across that paragon of teachers, Socrates, who really shows us how to conduct a discussion. Here it's the question of justice and whether we should act justly only in order to avoid being punished. Children as well as adults are interested in such questions. Then we start one of the greatest stories of all times, *Gulliver's Travels.* The children cannot help being entranced by these voyages to fascinating lands and peoples. And the parents may be able to see in the stories comments on human society which they can pass on to the youngsters.

We end the first group of readings with the American Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the United States Constitution. There is every reason why we should discuss with our children these basic documents of western political history. Let them see how they still affect government today all over the world.

So you see the first group offers a balanced list of intriguing and worthwhile readings. Our second group follows the same pattern with selections from history, biography, science, essays, a novel, and a play. And our third group includes writings of compelling human interest, all the way from the memorable *Apology* of Socrates to William James's famous discussion of habit.

When you look over the lists of selections and start doing the readings you will agree that we have provided solid, savory fare for the whole family. These mental "meals" should prove to be among the most enjoyable and enriching occasions in your family life. Our belief is that your appetite and enjoyment will increase with the "eating."

We wish you and your family great joy and a richer life as you start out now on the Family Participation Plan.

FOUR

The Reading Guides

A note on the use of the Guides

Many of the readings are passages from one or more parts of a whole book. Longer books are, of course, divided into chapters or larger sections, designated in many cases as "Book I," "Book II," etc.

The passages to be read in the Family Participation Plan are indicated in this Guide in the same style as the indexed passages in the Syntopicon. The third reading for seventh and eighth graders, for example, is given as follows:

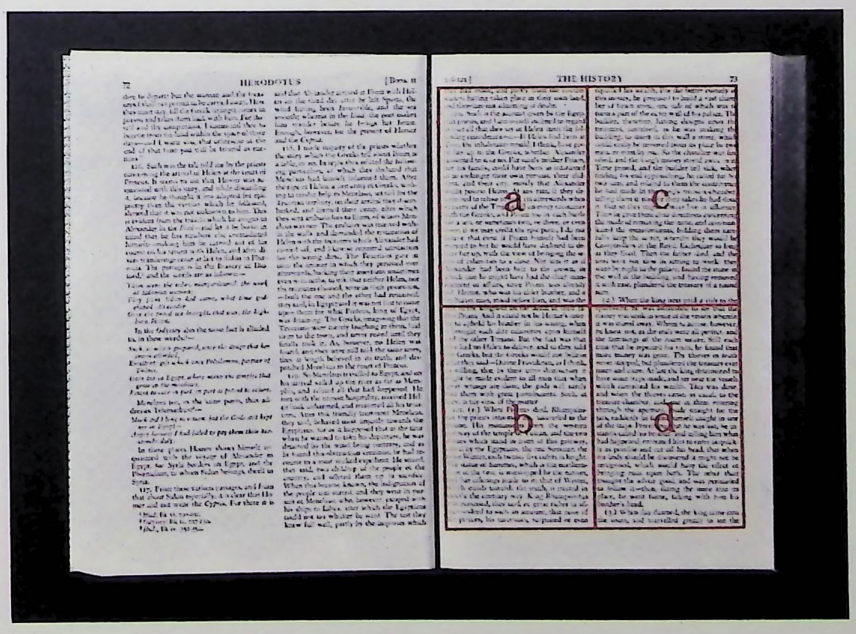
Herodotus: *Histories*

Recommended reading
Selections from Books I and II
in Vol. 6, pp. 6a-10a, 20a-21a, 49a-c, 52d-56b, 73b-74d

This means that there are five short passages in the *Histories,* by Herodotus, to be read. They are selections from Books I and II.

The references indicate not only the page, but the *quarter* of the page on which the reading begins and ends. For example, in the first passage in Herodotus, "pp. 6a-10a," the reading begins in the upper left quarter of page 6 and ends in the upper left quarter of page 10, each page of the *Great Books of the Western World* being divided as shown.

You will have no difficulty in determining exactly where, in the quarter page,



the reading begins and ends. Each begins at the beginning of a paragraph and ends at the end of a paragraph.

You are already aware that the Bible is not part of your set, although both the Old and New Testaments are completely indexed under each of the 102 Great Ideas in the Syntopicon. The family is expected to use its own Bible for reading and study of the *Great Books* and for the Family Participation Plan. Biblical passages are, of course, cited under chapter and verse, and these numbers are the same in the King James, the Douay, or the revised versions. (Actual Biblical quotations in the Guide are from the King James version.)

The suggestions given for discussion topics and questions under each reading are intended only as typical. You may want to use some or none of them, or any of them in conjunction with suggestions made by members of the family group. The group should feel perfectly free to "take off" from any point in the reading and consider any interesting questions that the reading raises. The more closely you connect the ideas with everyday life, the more interesting the discussion will be.

Guide I

Seventh and eighth grades

1
Homer: *The Odyssey*

2
The Bible: Proverbs

3
Herodotus: *Histories*

4
Plato: *Republic*

5
Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*

6
Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin: *American State Papers*

Homer

The Odyssey

Recommended reading
Books IX-XIII
in Vol. 4, pp. 229-254

Many of the *Great Books* were written long ago, but none as long ago as Homer's *Odyssey*. The fall of Troy (recounted in the *Iliad*) *may* have occurred in the twelfth century B.C. Homer *may* have lived about three centuries later. But he *may not* have lived at all; nobody knows with certainty when or where he lived or died, or who he was, or *whether* he was.

The "divine Homer" was the Gospel of the ancient Greeks—and to *them* he was ancient. His two masterpieces are the first books ever written that have come down to us intact. They may, of course, be the collected songs of many storytellers, sewn together by a single minstrel. But the plot, the characters, the style, and the language all suggest the work of one genius. Scholars generally agree that there must have been an actual Homer —the "father" of all literature.

What could this most ancient of all writers have to say to the twentieth century? What could he have written about that might possibly concern *us*? The theme of the *Odyssey* is the answer. It is the story of a demobilized soldier making his way home after the war, eager to see his faithful wife again and the baby boy (now grown) that he left behind him. And in spite of his eagerness, and his cunning, and the help of the gods, it takes him ten long years to get home. He simply cannot resist stopping off on the way—and getting into trouble.

Ancient or modern?

Here is the eternal conflict within the human heart, the struggle between security and liberty, between home and adventure, between "social security" and "free enterprise." Here is the homeward-bound husband at evening, dog-tired, determined to get back to his waiting wife, his easy chair, and his slippers—and then he stops in at the corner bar, or runs into an old friend. Here is the boy or girl who was sent to the store, or to school, with instructions to *come straight home*—and how and why it took him so long, and his alibis.

Odysseus' journey is the journey of Man.

In the selection we read, Books IX-XIII, the hero is telling just how it all happened. After all his adventures and misfortunes among gods and men, giants and enchantresses, storms and monsters and ghosts, he finds himself cast up on a shore, his ships and his comrades all lost. The daughter of the Phaeacian king, Alcinous, takes him to her father's court, where, befriended and refreshed, he recites his wonderful adventures to the spell-bound monarch—what happened in the land of the Lotus-eaters to make men forget their love of home; how the wily leader outwitted the one-eyed Cyclops; how the voyagers, in sight of home, were driven out to sea again by the winds they themselves unloosed through their insatiable curiosity; the loss of all but Odysseus as the punishment for the starving adventurers' slaughter of the sacred cattle of Thrinacia.

These, the fortunes and misfortunes, not of war, but of war heroes heading for home, are the burden of Odysseus' tale at the court of King Alcinous. The selection we read in the Family Plan ends with his delivery to the shores of his own land, Ithaca, where the "godlike Odysseus," "hardy man, subtle of wit, of guile insatiate, of all men far the first in counsel and in discourse," has still to recover his home and his family from the conspirators who have been trying, for ten years, to persuade his wife that her hero husband is dead.

Once we see that the *Odyssey* is the story of every man, of his conflicting desires and his dreams of somehow achieving all of them, the family discussion moves from heroes and gods to everyday life. Odysseus is Superman—the man we all want to be, capable of getting everything we want. Why don't we succeed? Why didn't he?

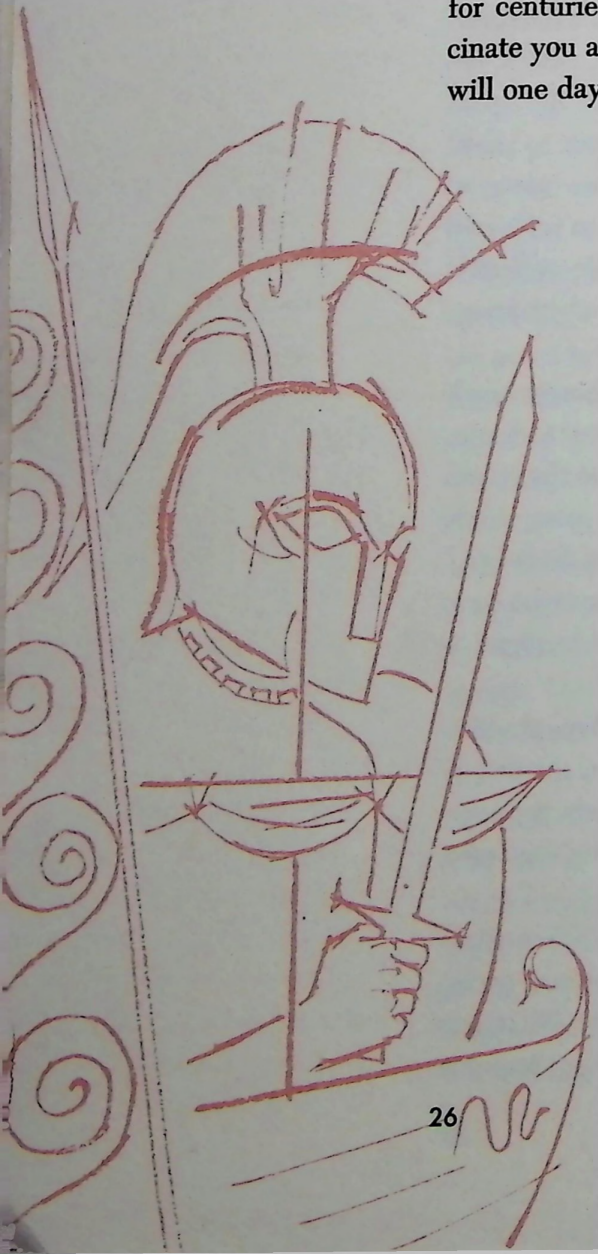
Why wasn't this craftiest of men able to get back home, when thousands of his countrymen got back without misadventure? What was wrong with him? Why did he suffer each of his separate misfortunes? What was there about him—about any boy or girl or man or woman—that got him into

a peck of trouble? Would you rather be Odysseus—or be safe at home?

What were his virtues? What were his faults? Was he a good man, a great man—and are they the same? Was he clever, wise—and are *they* the same?

Here, in the great epic poem that inspired such epics as the *Aeneid* of Virgil, the *Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, we find a golden opportunity to bring home to our children the meaning of symbolism: Scylla and Charybdis, for example—the confrontation of two deadly alternatives, two unhappy choices, and the desperate effort to steer safely between them; or the forgetfulness of duty overwhelmed by pleasure; or the temptation to blame others (gods, parents, teachers, the boss) for our own mistakes.

The woes and wonders of the *Odyssey* constitute the earliest human account of human nature. This book has fascinated adults and children alike for centuries; as you talk about it in the family circle, it will come to fascinate you and your children, and you may be sure that even your youngest will one day want to read all of it.



The Bible

Proverbs

Recommended reading
Selections, as indicated below

THE Book of Proverbs is a collection of short sayings. It is attributed to the king of Israel whose wisdom is *proverbial*—Solomon. The beauty of Proverbs puts it in the poetical class of the Song of Solomon and the Psalms (many of which come from Solomon's father, King David). The theme of the book is advice and instruction, in the direct and pithy form to which we now give the meaning of the word "proverb," an ancient bit of wisdom that "speaks volumes" in a few simple words.

Because of its nonnarrative character, this book (like Psalms, or other collections of thoughts) does not need to be read page by page. If you have not already read all of it, you will want to, in time, and so will the children. But for purposes of a lively, many-sided discussion, it is necessary only to read a few chapters and scattered verses. They are suggested below.

What kind of book is Proverbs? Read Chapter 1 : 1–6—does this tell you? Read the next verse (1 : 7). Does this? Does it seem to be a *religious* book? Certainly, it must be since it is a book of the Bible. But what is the connection between religion and wisdom?

Is it a "how-to" book? It gives advice and instruction, but in the same way a cookbook or a do-it-yourself guide does? How do you go about doing the things it advises? How do you get wisdom? How do you become wise?

In what way does this book differ from a story? Are all stories true? How do we know which are and which aren't? Is Proverbs true?

Who is giving the advice, and to whom is it given? Read 13 : 1 and 22 : 6. It would appear that older people instruct younger, that parents in-

struct children. But is this the kind of instruction you get in school? How does what you learn in school differ from what you learn in this book? And should children do as their parents tell them, without thinking about it, or should they learn by their own experience? Do you think your parents should tell you what time to come home, or when to go to bed or do your work, or should *you* decide these things?

The whole book presents a contrast between the wise man and the fool. The fool is portrayed in 13 : 3, 14 : 15, 18 : 13, and in Chapters 26 and 27; the wise man in 9 : 9, 17 : 17, 22 : 1, 27 : 2, and 27 : 12; and the two are contrasted in many chapters, such as Verses 1–8, 10, 12–19, 25, 28, and 32–33 of Chapter 15.

In your family discussion you might try, as a group, to summarize the outstanding characteristics of the wise man and the fool, and to analyze each major characteristic in terms of everyday life today. You have already asked how people become wise; the question now is how people become foolish, and what can be done to avoid foolishness.

Or take one short, precise section, such as Chapter 6 : 16–19, and discuss the seven "abominations unto" the Lord, asking yourselves what is really wrong with each of the seven. What, for instance, is really wrong with sowing discord, or with a "lying tongue" if you aren't caught? Chapter 25 : 28 speaks of ruling one's own spirit. Just what does this mean in real life, in school and at home, in games, in eating, in getting up in the morning?

In the whole of Chapter 8 wisdom is personified as the speaker, addressing mankind. This is the most famous and poetic of the chapters of Proverbs. If you decide that the passages previously suggested are sufficient for advance reading, you may want the various members of the family discussion group to read parts of Chapter 8 aloud, restating the observations in their own terms as they go along. And you may want to finish the discussion with the question: How *practical* is all this advice? Might it have been practical in ancient times, but not now? How, if you took it, would it affect your conduct and your relations with other people your own age—both as parents and children?

Herodotus

Histories

Recommended reading
Selections from Books I and II in Vol. 6, pp. 6a-10a, 20a-21a, 49a-c, 52d-56b, 73b-74d

If Homer is the father of literature, Herodotus is the father of history. And, perhaps, of geography, travelogue, sociology, and—gossip. Along with his magnificent account of the rise of the Persian empire to domination of the world, he gives us the "inside dope" on just about everything an intrepid and inexhaustible reporter could discover in "the cradle of civilization." There wasn't anything that didn't interest him, from the titanic struggles of kings to the techniques of repairing roof leaks to the fashions in ladies' clothes. Herodotus has always been—and always will be—the great gold mine of all students of antiquity.

He traveled everywhere, and inquired of everybody. The customs, manners, morals, and religions, the legends, laws, and anecdotes of every land and of every person he met all went into his compendious record. A Greek and a patriot, at a time when his country was struggling under Persian domination, he was, nevertheless, first of all a historian, faithfully observing and just as faithfully reporting every side of what he saw and heard.

Herodotus set the pattern for the "historical approach" that, right up until the present moment, remains the ideal of scholars. He found out everything he could about a place, a people, an event, and presented it from all

sides. When there was no way of knowing—after he had exhausted all possible sources—which of two or more conflicting accounts was true, he recorded them all, often giving his reasons for putting more stock in one than another. His work conveys not only the genius of the historian and the elegance of a great writer, but a sense of great integrity.

The short selections we read in the Family Plan are intended only to give us a sample of the many Herodotuses—Herodotus the philosopher, telling of Solon's argument with Croesus about wealth and happiness, and the fate of the mighty Croesus; Herodotus the anthropologist, describing the races of man; Herodotus the geographer, shrewdly guessing the cause of the Nile's behavior—the sun is indeed responsible, for it creates the pressure changes that give rise to the monsoons that feed the river out of season—and even more shrewdly determining its source; Herodotus the psychologist (and again the philosopher), reporting the cunning of the Egyptian king, and of the still greater cunning of the man who robbed him.

Even these brief excursions into the fabulous past preserved by the first historian raise a whole world of questions for family discussion. Was Solon or Croesus right about happiness, and why? To what extent does human happiness depend upon fortune, or fate (or the gods of Homer)? To what extent are we free to achieve happiness by our own efforts, and to what extent are we ourselves (and not fortune or accident) responsible for what we do?

Herodotus takes us all the way back to one of the first civilizations of which we are the heirs. Has there been any progress, and, if so, in what direction? Are we wiser, better, happier than the ancient Persians or Egyptians? In what ways are we better off; in what ways (if any) worse off than they? Would you rather live here and now, or there and then? What causes progress? Is it continual? Inevitable? Is the world making progress right now? And what of our individual lives—do *we* make progress as persons, in the course of the years? Is individual progress like social progress?

What is history? How does it differ from, say, science, or fiction? Does it prove things the way science does, or in what other way? Does it consist of facts? What does history teach us (or does it teach us anything) about human nature, about nations, about war and peace? Have we "learned the lesson" of history? What (if anything) do these readings from Herodotus teach us that might be of use to modern man?

Plato

Republic

Recommended reading
Selection from Book II
in Vol. 7, pp. 311b-313a

And now we get our first glimpse—we shall meet him often again—of one of the greatest of all the teachers who ever lived and the noblest of men. Who was he? An ugly old man in rags, with no visible means of support, no business to attend to, nothing whatever to do but bother his busy betters, buttonhole them on the street and turn answers into questions, certainties into doubts, and the common furniture of existence into mysteries. This is Socrates.

With the exception of Jesus (whose life and doctrine, and even whose death, bear a marvelous resemblance to his own), Socrates was the most *disturbing* man in history. What made him so disturbing? What was he doing? He was, he said, only inquiring. What harm was he doing? What is so dangerous about an old man who, like a child, does nothing all day but ask questions?

Apparently there is something mortally dangerous to some societies about such men, for many states since have found it advisable to get rid of them, just as Athens ultimately found it advisable to get rid of Socrates. In the third- and fourth-year high school readings in the Family Plan we meet him again, in the *Apology,* this time on trial for his life. In subsequent readings we see him in prison awaiting the hemlock, in the *Crito,* and at his death in the *Phaedo.*

All of these dialogues, including the *Republic*, were written by his greatest pupil, Plato. Socrates himself never wrote anything. "The true way of writing," he said, is "only in principles of justice and nobility taught and communicated orally for the sake of instruction and graven in the soul." He wanted to leave well-wrought men, rather than well-written words, behind him. Plato preserved his teaching for us in the famous dialogues.

Socrates is the central character of these dialogues, piling question upon question, "refusing" as Thrasymachus complains in the *Republic*, "himself to answer, but taking and pulling to pieces the answer of someone else." The Platonic dialogues are more than artistic and philosophical masterpieces. They are educational masterpieces, too. They focus the crucial issues and the common terms of life so sharply, so persistently, and so many-sidedly that they are known among pedagogues as "teacher-proof"; the poorest instructor cannot fail completely with Plato.

But the real masterpiece is the "gadfly of Athens," who, in all the dialogues, asked the questions that ordinary people ask and extraordinary people cannot answer. The name of this incredible man has become, so to speak, a common noun—the synonym and symbol of the highest humanity. "Though you are not yet a Socrates," says Epictetus the Roman, "you ought to live as one seeking to be a Socrates." "It is better," says the Englishman John Stuart Mill, "to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."

The question in the *Republic* is, "What is justice?" One of the most instructive purposes served by this inquiry is the unforgettable lesson that the meaning of the important words cannot be found in the dictionary. Let the family group look up "justice" and pursue it from "justice" to "just," from "just" to "righteous," from "righteous" to "equitable," and from "equitable" back to "just" and thence back to "justice." The dictionary does not give the answer.

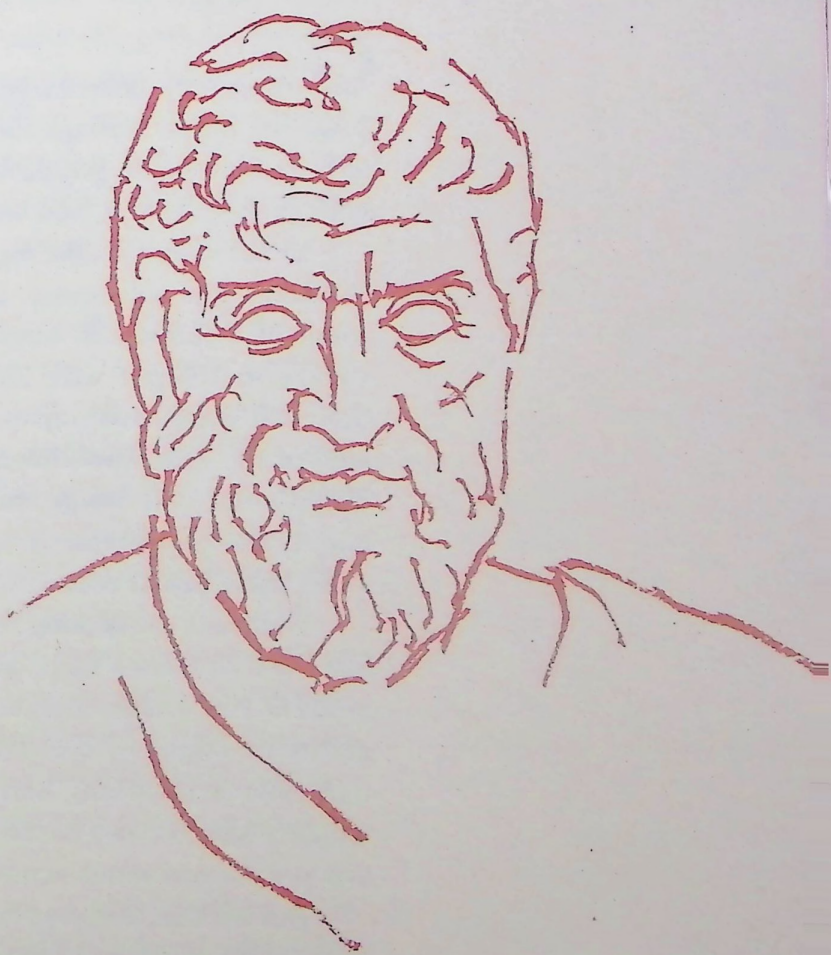
In the passage we read, in Book II of this long dialogue, Cephalus, at whose house Socrates is arguing with a group of young men, has given up the inquiry. His son, Polemarchus, has inherited the argument, trying unsuccessfully to show that justice consists of "doing good to your friends and harm to your enemies." Then Thrasymachus jumps in and tries to maintain that justice is the "interest of the stronger."

Now Glaucon attacks. The majority of men, he holds, really believe injustice to be better than justice. And he tells the story of the wonderful ring of Gyges. If a man can *appear* just, while being unjust, he will have the best possible life; while the worst of all possible lives would be to be just in fact and *appear* unjust. The only good reason for ever being just is to appear just.

The issues for discussion are inescapable. Is "honesty the best policy" because it gets us what we want? If it didn't, would it be the worst policy? Is a person just because he is forced to be by law? Or because he wants to *appear* to be just and he does not have the ring of Gyges to enable him to "get away with it"?

Is there such a thing as justice which is good in itself, and a good reason for being just apart from appearances and reward and punishment? Why, if we know we won't be caught, don't we cheat in school, or in games, or in doing our chores at home? Why doesn't mother, when she's out shopping, grab a pair of gloves from the counter while nobody's looking? Why doesn't dad lift a few dollars out of the petty-cash box—which nobody ever keeps track of—at the office?

Of course we can say that there's always a *chance* of being caught. That's where the ring of Gyges comes in. If you *couldn't* be caught doing wrong, why would you ever do right—especially if, when you did the right thing, everyone thought you were doing wrong?



Swift

Gulliver's Travels

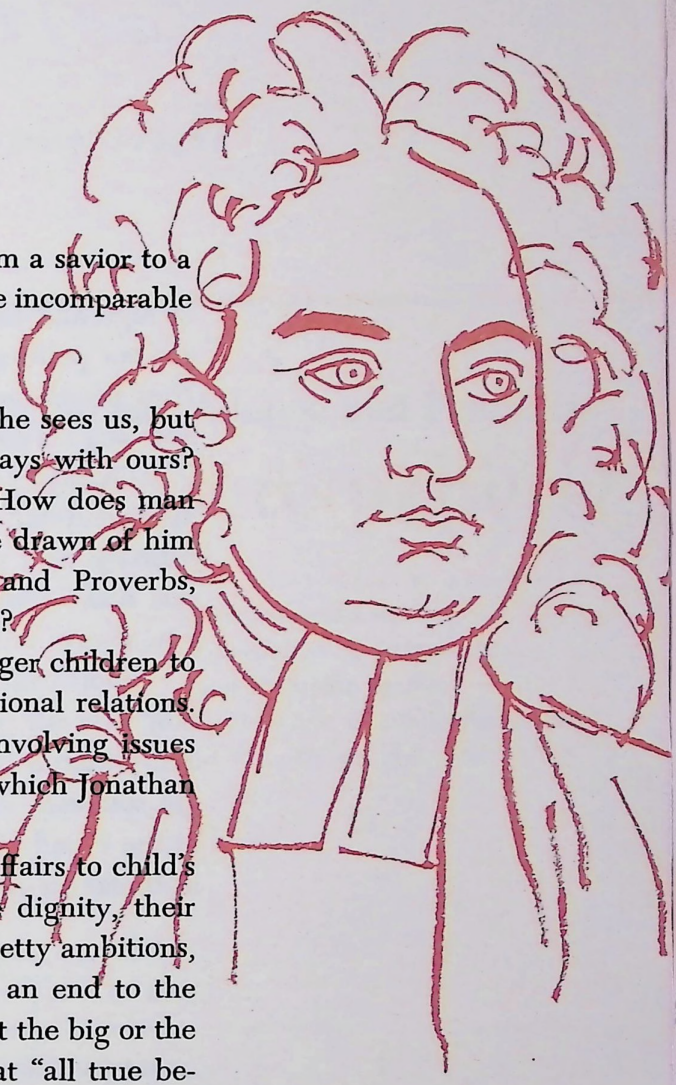
Recommended reading
Book I
in Vol. 36, pp. 3-42

Gulliver—the beloved brain child of that fierce and bitter old Irishman Jonathan Swift. Perhaps the most savage criticism of mankind ever made—and the delight of generations of children the world over. How could one book be both things, and how could one genius merge them?

In the *Great Books* Family Plan we read only the account of Captain Gulliver's first adventure, undertaken not at all intentionally, but as the result of a shipwreck. Children (like grownups) who come back from the voyage to Lilliput will, like Gulliver himself, be unable to "stay home"; they will want to set off with him on his second voyage, in Book II, to the land of the giant Brobdingnagians, on his next voyage to the Laputans, the Struldbrugs, and finally, in Book IV, on his visit to the land of the wise horses, the Houyhnhnms, where the gentle, virtuous beasts have in their midst some brutal creatures called Yahoos, who seem to resemble men.

Gulliver's awakening on the shores of Lilliput, the captive of tiny men less than six inches high, who have tied him down to the beach with thousands of tiny strings attached to tiny pegs—this is an image never to be forgotten by young or old. The great loads of food and drink, whole animals that make a mouthful, barrels that provide a swallow—the machinery of a whole nation set into motion to guard and sustain one sailor of normal size—this is a picture which sends the reader's imagination soaring.

But all this, meeting the eye of the mind, is only a beginning. By the time Gulliver leaves Lilliput, having been transformed from a captive to a



marvel, and from a marvel to a savior of the nation, and from a savior to a traitor and a fugitive, even the youngest reader knows that the incomparable Swift has held the mirror to mankind.

And in the mirror—what?

How does Swift see us, not in Gulliver, *through* whom he sees us, but in the Lilliputians and the comparison of their lives and ways with ours? What is he saying to us about ourselves and all mankind? How does man "come out" in *Gulliver's Travels,* compared with the picture drawn of him in the books the family has already discussed—Homer and Proverbs, Herodotus and the *Republic*? What kind of creatures are we?

With Swift, we have no difficulty introducing our younger children to the mysterious wonders of public life, politics, and international relations. These matters are grim and pompous in the daily paper, involving issues which are said to be *much* too complicated for children—to which Jonathan Swift says: Humbug.

The eighteenth-century satirist reduces all these great affairs to child's play—and to children's misbehavior. He mocks men's false dignity, their empty honors and their emptier hatreds, their fantastically petty ambitions, and their willingness to slaughter each other (even to put an end to the world) over such issues as the opening of the breakfast egg at the big or the little end—complete with the authority of their prophet that "all true believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end," leaving the determination of *which* end is convenient to "every man's conscience, or at least in the power of the magistrate to determine."

Swift is making fun of us—of all of us. Are we really like that?

Are the Lilliputians better or worse than we are? Are their customs superior or inferior to ours? Do we elect men to high office and make alliances and wars for more or less intelligent reasons than they do? We would not choose our public officials because they were good ropedancers, as the Lilliputians do, but exactly why do we choose one rather than another? We would not go to war—or get into a fight in the schoolyard—over the proper end for breaking an egg, but exactly why do we fight?

Swift contrasts the Lilliputians' laws with ours, preferring reward to punishment as the reason for their being lawful. Does this make sense? The Lilliputians make ingratitude a terrible crime. Should it be? Men are preferred in Lilliput for their goodness rather than their knowledge. Which kind of man would you prefer to be ruled by, to have as a parent or teacher, or to be yourself?

The Lilliputians seem to be different from us, in some respects, but identical in others. They are divided among themselves over the question

of high and low heels, split into hostile and contending factions. On what are our political parties divided? On what basis do we choose our friends? How are cliques and gangs established at school? What do we differ about, and why do we prefer one set of people to another?

Gulliver's Travels is a form of writing known as satire. It is a "take-off" on us and our customs, a kind of humor, but with something cruel about its subtlety. If a person wants to criticize, why doesn't he do it directly? Do you make friends making fun of people? Is it ever necessary? Or should you always criticize directly?

Swift calls upon us to examine ourselves, our self-esteem, our satisfaction with our own lives, our own family, our own race, religion, or country. Self-criticism is the hardest of all achievements, the most difficult thing to get someone to do. *Gulliver* shows us our faults. How would each member of the Family Plan group, instead of criticizing the others, like to say what he thinks his own faults are?

Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin

American state papers

Recommended reading
Declaration of Independence, and Preamble to the Constitution of the United States in Vol. 43, pp. 1-3, 11a

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag is familiar to all American children, but the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the Constitution are known to few of them—and perhaps to few adults. Yet the Declaration is one of the greatest of all political documents—the assertion to the world of a new, and revolutionary, theory of human life and human government. And the Constitution, whose purpose is stated in its preamble, is the supreme law of the United States.

The Declaration was written by three of the very wisest of America's "founding fathers." Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin had all been "brought up on" the great books. Their thinking was drawn from the best thinking of all the ages preceding their own. On that thinking they built their own philosophy of government. With that thinking before them they wrote the Declaration of Independence.

They worked hard on it. It meant life and death to them and their fellow Americans. Its words were weighed and reweighed, written and rewritten. It threw down the gauntlet to the very *idea* of despotism, benevolent or tyrannical. These men enunciated "self-evident truths" which their critics everywhere called self-evident falsehoods.

The Declaration of Independence is the battle cry, not merely of American freedom, but of human freedom. It was much more radical, in its

time, than Communism is today. It proclaimed the overthrow of the principles upon which all hitherto-existing societies had been built, and not just the overthrow of the prevailing system. It committed the new United States of America to the world revolution of the rights of man.

Its effects were felt immediately in Europe, in the convulsions of the French Revolution and, shortly afterward, in Germany and elsewhere. They are still being felt today—in America and throughout the world, in Asia, in Africa, and again in Europe—wherever men are oppressed by government and alert to argue the case for liberty. Time has not withered the work of Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin, and it never will.

When we read and study the Declaration, we need not know any more of American history than any youngster knows. The enduring words of the document are found in the opening lines (down to the words, "To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world") and in the closing paragraph. The charges against the British king are particulars of primarily historical interest; the sections we discuss are universal and ageless.

Are all men equal? Obviously not. Johnny is bigger than Tom, Tom is stronger than Harry, Harry is smarter than Joe. Some men are rich, some poor. Some are wise, some foolish. Some are talented, and some seem to be "born dumb." What does it mean, then, to say that all men are equal?

Ah, but is this what the Declaration says? It says that all men are *created* equal. And what does that mean? What *can* it mean? Does it mean that they are born equal? We know that isn't so. Some are born healthy, some sickly, and so on. "Created equal" must mean something different from "are equal" or "are born equal." What?

And if this is ambiguous, what does it mean to call it "self-evident"? What is a self-evident truth, or isn't there any such thing? Presumably it is something you know to be true as soon as you see it, or as soon as you understand the words; something that doesn't need to be proved. Consider the proposition, "The whole is greater than the part." Is this self-evident? Is the whole of a pie greater than a slice of it? Always? How do we know?

Men, "created equal," are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." What does "Creator" mean, and does its meaning help us to understand the word "created"? But how can there be such a thing as an unalienable right—a right that cannot be taken from a person? In 1776 some men in America were, in fact, slaves, as the authors of the Declaration well knew. They did not have liberty; did they still have the *right* to liberty? Why? Don't we give the government the *right* to take our lives, restrict our liberty, or interfere with our pursuit of happiness under certain conditions? Have these rights then been *alienated* from us?

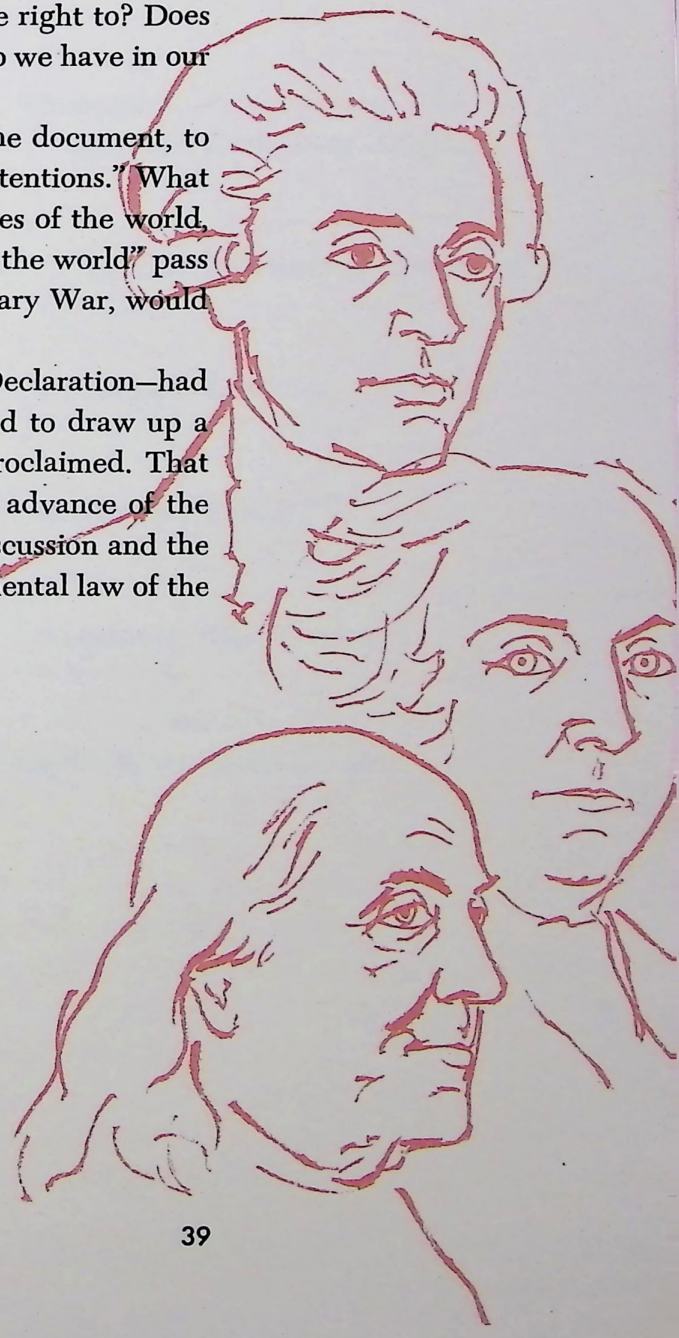
The Declaration speaks of "the laws of nature and of nature's God." Are there two kinds of law, as it seems to say? What are some of nature's laws, some of God's?

The signers of the Declaration of Independence proclaimed themselves revolutionaries, overthrowing their government. They maintained that people have a *right* and a *duty* to rebel when the government oppresses them sufficiently. Do you believe, as they did, in revolution? Under what conditions? Should there be a law permitting revolution? Is there?

Governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed." What does this mean? What do we mean by democracy? Do we give our consent to our government? How? Does it ever do anything against our consent, or against any individual citizen's? Does it have the right to? Does it have our consent to? Who governs us? How much "say" do we have in our government?

The signers of the Declaration appeal, at the end of the document, to "the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions." What do they mean by that? Why don't they appeal to the peoples of the world, or to the kings or rulers? How does "the Supreme Judge of the world" pass judgment? If the American colonies had lost the Revolutionary War, would that have proved that their intentions were wrong?

In 1787 the time for fine words—the fine words of the Declaration—had passed. Now the victorious and independent Americans had to draw up a plan of government along the lines the Declaration had proclaimed. That plan is the Constitution. Its Preamble need not be read in advance of the family discussion, but it should be read at the end of the discussion and the idea of a constitution should be touched upon as the fundamental law of the nation, by which all other laws are judged.



Guide II

First and second year high school

1
Thucydides: *Peloponnesian War*
Lincoln: *Gettysburg Address*

2
Euclid: *Elements of Geometry*

3
Plutarch: *Lives*

4
Montaigne: *Essays*

5
Cervantes: *Don Quixote*

6
Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*

Thucydides

Peloponnesian War

Lincoln

Gettysburg Address

Recommended reading
Selection from Book II
of the *Peloponnesian War*
in Vol. 6, pp. 395c-399a
and all of the *Gettysburg Address*
Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. 14

Here are two wartime speeches by two great leaders of two great nations—more than two thousand years apart. Neither of them was a writer by profession. Lincoln's letters and speeches are in no sense books and are not included in the *Great Books,* but they are readily available. The Gettysburg Address is reprinted on page 44. Nor are Pericles' speeches books; we have them here because Thucydides in his *History* has preserved them.

But the two speeches should be read together and discussed as an exercise in comparison and contrast. Both are funeral orations in honor of the fallen soldiers in the midst of a devastating war. The occasion always demands that such speeches be solemn, comforting, and reassuring. It is inevitable, under the circumstances, that the "war aims" of the country be stated and defended, and that the outlook for victory, peace, and the achievement of those aims, for which so terrible a sacrifice has been and is still to be made, be presented.

Pericles' Funeral Oration introduces us to Thucydides, whose account of the war that ruined Greek civilization comes down to us as the model of military history. It has never been equaled. Like Herodotus, Thucydides was a patriotic citizen, "on the side of" his own city, Athens, in its war to the death with Sparta. But to read his *History* we would never know it. All succeeding ages have marveled at his objectivity—at his excruciating fairness in dealing with every aspect of the tangled and tragic conflict. He makes out the best possible case for Athens and its allies—and for Sparta and its allies.

The world is thus indebted to this one great writer for what we call historical criticism, in which a rare individual is able to stand apart from all conflict, even from that in which he is emotionally involved, and present the vices, as well as the virtues, of his friends and the virtues, as well as the vices, of his enemies.

The whole of Thucydides of course deserves to be read. There is nothing—except the pressure of their schoolwork—to keep high-school students from reading it all. It is clearly, simply, vigorously written. Like any good war story, it is engrossing. The descriptions—like those of the plague which so disastrously weakened Athens, or of the political intrigues and conspiracies—are masterpieces of action reporting. The boy or girl who has read the whole of Thucydides has a panoramic knowledge of ancient Greece, the land whose high civilization the whole of the modern West has inherited.

The young reader will learn, too, how civilizations rise and fall, how they are destroyed and how they destroy themselves; what war really is, and how it comes about, and what its consequences really are. Above all, this masterpiece of human thought and observation conveys an unconscious feeling for the fairness of seeing both sides of every issue—a feeling for skepticism of all lavish praise and for equal skepticism of all lavish condemnation. The *Peloponnesian War* is an imperishable lesson in impartiality.

Pericles himself, of course, is not impartial. He is delivering a "Fourth of July" speech. The rest of the book shows us where he exaggerated both the glories of Athens and the shortcomings of its enemies; but until we have read the whole book, the comparison with the Gettysburg Address will raise the critical questions.

What kind of picture of Athens and the Athenians do we get from the Funeral Oration? How does it compare with Lincoln's picture of the United States and with his portrayal of the two parties to the Civil War? What seems to constitute the good man and the good citizen in Pericles? In Lincoln? Is there ever any difference between the good man and the good

citizen, or are the two virtues interchangeable? Might a good man be a bad citizen?

Which is the better and nobler man, the Athenian in Pericles or the American in Lincoln? Which is the better state? Which has the higher ideals?

In which of the two is liberty the more widely honored and cultivated? Is the liberty of the individual good for the state? Isn't it dangerous to the "national security," especially in time of war? Should everyone be allowed by the laws to say and do as he likes? If so, what will happen to the state? Doesn't freedom weaken it? Should anyone be allowed to enter the country, immigration be open to all, as in Pericles' Athens?

These last questions arise, of course, much more sharply in Pericles than they do in the few spare words of Lincoln. But the family discussion group may already have had a session on the Declaration of Independence, and in any case our familiarity with our own present-day situation and the "cold war" will enable us to consider them in terms of the moment. How would we compare our own government's policies with Pericles'?

The contrast between the wartime leaders of ancient Athens and of the United States during the Civil War should be discussed on the basis of the effect the two orators were trying to create. Was it different in the two cases? Were they different kinds of men? What was each of them trying to do to his audience? Which would make the better leader in war? In peace?

LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

"FOURSCORE and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Euclid

Elements of Geometry

Recommended reading
Book I
in Vol. 11, pp. 1-29

Here, at last, is where your youngsters "get even" with you! You have lived long, suffered much, experienced every joy and every sorrow; you are wise in the ways of the world, deep in your understanding, and old in your knowledge. True, true, but when it comes to mathematics, your years are useless, and your children are often called upon to demonstrate the patience with you that you have up to now shown with them.

Mathematics—the queen of the sciences—is the one "pure" branch of knowledge. It is not to be learned by living, or by the common mode of reflection, calculation, and judgment that produces the practical wisdom of the mother and father, the citizen and the statesman, the friend and adviser. Opinion—seasoned or unseasoned—has no part in it. Decisions in ethics and politics, in business and finance, all involve the future, and, because they do, they involve guesswork; the very best knowledge we can have of how to act in a given situation is uncertain and variable. But not in mathematics, where the future, the present, and the past are all one.

As much of the reading chosen for this plan deals with abstract ideas, it is fun here to concern ourselves with fundamentals and thus to involve a different sort of thinking. Mathematics is the oldest and greatest of games and the foundation of all other games. In addition, of course, it is the indispensable means of comprehension and communication in every area of tangible reality. We are all mathematicians, however primitive, and there isn't an hour that passes, in anyone's day, that does not call for the exercise of his mathematical knowledge.

Without doubt some of us—as well as our children—have more of a taste or genius for mathematics than others. If there is one in your family (be he but six or seven years old), he is likely to run the rest of the family ragged. Grandma and Grandpa may have to sit at his feet and learn from him! But we all have to learn numbers and measurement. Mathematics, besides being the mind's sharpest tool and the *sine qua non* of many occupations, is indispensable to a rounded understanding of the technological world we live in.

The word "geometry" means "earth measurement" and, as a branch of mathematics, arose in ancient Egypt in response to man's practical needs. The periodic flooding of the Nile made it necessary to survey the land for the re-establishment of boundaries. The Greeks took these simple rules of measurement and developed the mathematical system in which the statements or propositions are so arranged that each is a logical consequence of some previously proved proposition—except for the first few.

These first few, called Postulates and Common Notions (or Axioms) (p. 2), are "self-evident," that is, known to be true without proof. In addition, certain terms used in the Postulates and Axioms, such as "point" and "line," must be defined, but some of the terms used in the definitions must be taken for granted or we would keep going around in circles. Thus the foundations of geometry appear to be a set of undefined terms and a set of unproved statements regarding them!

How do we know that the Postulates and Axioms are true if they are not proved? This question presents one of the greatest of all philosophic dilemmas. Plato held that mathematics is knowledge "remembered" from a previous existence in which we could contemplate pure forms directly. Augustine thought that all ideas are in the mind of God and are revealed to man. Goethe insisted that mathematical formulas are merely by-products of our own rules for the use of words: "Two times two is not four, but just two times two, and that is what we call four for short. But four is nothing new at all."

There is also widespread disagreement concerning the "reality" of mathematical concepts. Does a line—that which "has no breadth"—exist? If so, where? Some philosophers of mathematics maintain that the Postulates and Axioms have no necessary relationship to facts about the nature of the world or man, while others believe that mathematical statements do relate to reality, but are merely assumptions, "true" only as long as they work in practice.

Euclid's *Elements* was the first systematic attempt to compile all known geometry. It is safe to say that no other textbook has remained in use prac-

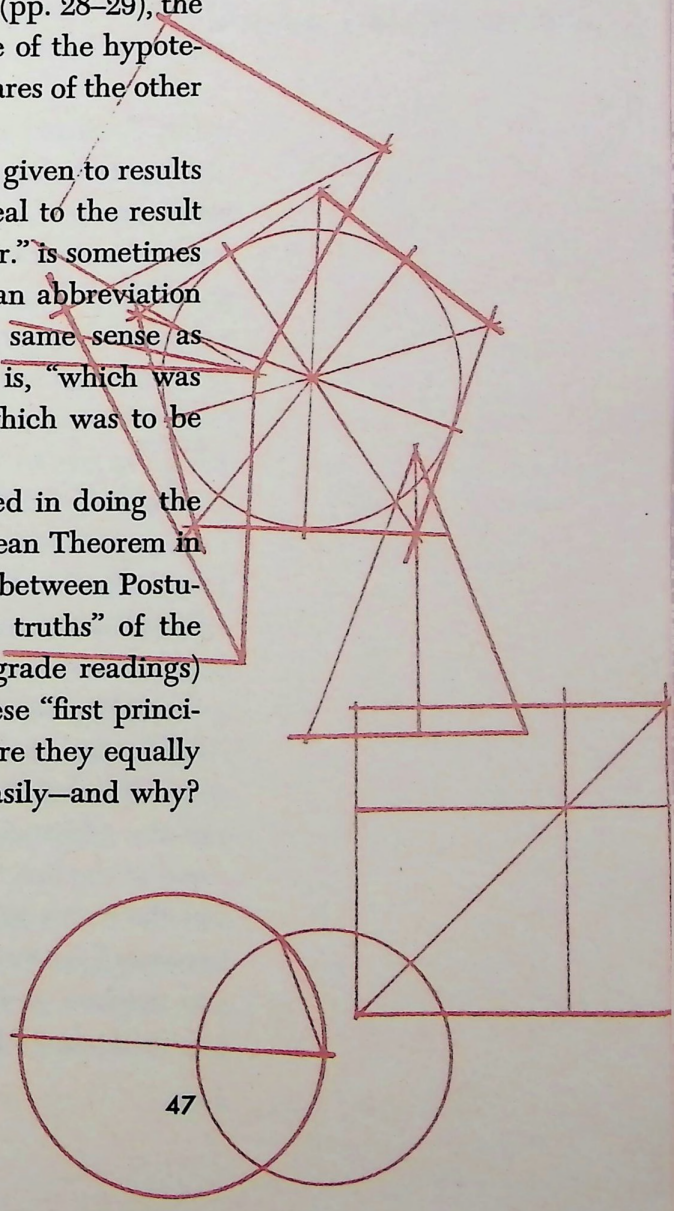
tically unchanged for more than twenty centuries; safe, too, to say that no other book ever written has been so influential as a model for rigorous demonstration in any branch of knowledge. In the unbroken tradition of the great books, Euclid is believed to have been taught by pupils of Plato, the pupil of Socrates. He lived about 300 B.C.

The family discussion of the *Elements* will be amusing—painfully amusing—as parents and children "break their heads" together. But the selection here is short, and the work interesting. Each member of the discussion group really needs a pencil and paper this time; a blackboard would help; and this is one Family Plan meeting that might well take place around the kitchen or dining-room table after the dishes have been cleared.

First read aloud and discuss the definitions, Postulates, and Common Notions (Axioms), one by one (pp. 1–2). Then go through the demonstrations, very carefully mastering each step, of Propositions 1 through 4 (pp. 2–4), and, if the whole group is up to it, Proposition 47 (pp. 28–29), the famous Pythagorean Theorem which proves that the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

Notice that in the steps of the reasoning, *references* are given to results previously obtained. Thus "1.5" means that we should appeal to the result established in the Fifth Proposition of the First Book. "Constr." is sometimes used as an abbreviation of "Construction," and "Hyp." as an abbreviation for "Hypothesis." (The word "Hypothesis" is used in the same sense as "supposition.") "Q.E.F." means *quod erat faciendum,* that is, "which was to be done," and "Q.E.D.," *quod erat demonstrandum,* "which was to be proved." It sounds tougher than it really is.

If the whole family has worked and laughed itself tired in doing the first four Propositions, you might decide to do the Pythagorean Theorem in a second session on Euclid, winding up with a comparison between Postulates and Axioms, on the one hand, and the "self-evident truths" of the Declaration of Independence (in the seventh- and eighth-grade readings) on the other. Could it be that these unproved concepts, these "first principles" of government and geometry, are of the same kind? Are they equally certain, equally believable? Which do we agree on more easily—and why?



Plutarch

Lives

Recommended reading
Selections from the lives
of Lycurgus, Numa, Alexander,
and Caesar
in Vol. 14, pp. 36a-d, 40c-42a,
47a-c, 51c-52a, 58d-60b,
542d-543b, 551a-552b, 564d-566b,
583d-584b, 593d-595d, 602c-603c

What profit shall [a boy] not reap as to the business of men by reading the lives of Plutarch? But, withal, let [the teacher] remember to what end his instructions are principally directed, and that he do not so much imprint in his pupil's memory . . . where Marcellus died, as why it was unworthy of his duty that he died there. Let him not teach him so much the narrative parts of history as to judge them . . . Plutarch had rather we should applaud his judgment than commend his knowledge, and had rather leave us with an appetite to read more, than glutted with that we have already read.

Montaigne, "Of the Education of Children"

This is our first direct encounter in the Family Plan with moral philosophy, with human character and its development, although we have touched the subject indirectly in several books the family has discussed, especially in Proverbs and the *Republic* in the seventh- and eighth-grade readings. Now, with our children in high school, we and they together face the issue of character, not in the ordinary way of discipline within the family, but as an intellectual problem.

Plutarch, a Greek, spent considerable time in Rome in the first century of the Christian era, long after "the glory that was Greece" had vanished and at the height of "the grandeur that was Rome," the so-called golden age of the Emperor Trajan. The Greek influence on Rome was primarily in the realm of culture, and many Greeks, both freemen and slaves, were famous as teachers in the new capital of the world. Much of Plutarch's work has come down to us, and it is all moral in nature. He himself, in his "Alexander"

(pp. 540d–541a), tells us the purpose of the *Lives,* to which we are indebted for much of our knowledge of antiquity:

> It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men. . . . Therefore, as portrait-painters are more exact in the lines and features of the face, in which the character is seen, than in the other parts of the body, so I must be allowed to give my more particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men. . . .

Plutarch was, in a word, a moralist. He was interested in portraying character, not in recording great and noisy actions on the world's stage. By means of examples of the strengths and weaknesses of famous men, he sought to provide moral instruction to boys and girls, to teach them to ponder the traits that build character—and ruin it. He is the first biographer, but a biographer, as he himself tells us, of the inner lives of men, concerned with their outward behavior only as it indicates what kinds of men they were.

Lycurgus (pp. 32–48) was the lawgiver of Sparta, a patriarch rather than a king, who sought to establish his city on a true and enduring basis. When we have read the selections indicated in "Lycurgus," we are ready to ask ourselves whether, as we know our own lives and our own country, Lycurgus was right in abolishing inequality of possessions and establishing a kind of communism; whether his "Spartan" dread of luxury as a corrosive and weakening force, in the lives of both the individual and the state, was justified. (A comparison with the luxury of Athens, of which Pericles boasts in the Funeral Oration, would be in order here, as well, of course, as a comparison with ourselves.) Were the laws of Lycurgus good or bad, and in what ways? Would such a lawgiver be good for us—a benevolent dictator?

Numa (pp. 49–61) was called upon by the people to be the second king of Rome. With a deep and honorable sense of responsibility, he established customs and laws designed to preserve justice and religion, and he shunned war and conquest. The selections we read of "Numa" lead to a discussion of the role of a philosopher in dealing with practical problems. Would it be wise to put a man like Albert Schweitzer at the head of the state? How successfully would a nation survive today—ours, for instance—with a Numa as its leader?

Alexander the Great (pp. 540–576) and Julius Caesar (pp. 577–604) were rulers of another kind. They were men of military genius and huge personal ambition. In their different ways and places each sought to conquer the world, almost succeeded, and failed. Alexander died in India, miserable and

restless, mistrustful of his friends and dissatisfied with himself. Caesar, one of the most popular leaders of the masses who ever lived, wanted to be emperor or dictator, and his ambition brought about his violent death by a conspiracy which included men who, like Brutus, wanted to save the Republic from him.

Having read the short selections in "Alexander" and "Caesar," the family discussion group might analyze the good and bad traits of the two men, their virtues and their failings, and ask how they might have gotten what they wanted or, had they been different, if they would have wanted the things they did. Then, of course, the two giants of world conquest should be compared with the two men who sought not to rule, but to serve. What do the four figures have in common? What were the differences in their characters? Which of the four would you rather be? Which would you rather be ruled by? Which would you rather have as a friend? As a teacher?

The very short reading selections in each of these four lives are intended only to convey the flavor of Plutarch. The discussion that develops will in all probability call for a second session, and in preparation the group might read "Lycurgus and Numa Compared" (pp. 61–64). After that discussion the family may vote to go back and read the four lives in full, for a third meeting on Plutarch.

Montaigne

Essays

Recommended reading
Selections from the essay
"Of the Education of Children"
in Vol. 25, pp. 63c-64a, 64c-74a,
and the entire essay "Of Cannibals"
in Vol. 25, pp. 91d-98a

The family should not assign itself the reading of Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals," which is here indicated in full. The selections from "Of the Education of Children" add up to a long enough advance reading assignment, and the subject matter is, of course, more important for family discussion. "Of Cannibals" is, however, very amusing for young people (and old!), as well as instructive, and your family group may decide to read it as a kind of "bonus" for a second discussion meeting on Montaigne; the discussion of the comparative advantages of "civilized" and "wild" society will take care of itself.

With the readings in Montaigne, the Family Plan takes two new steps forward. Here is our first meeting with the essay—a form of writing familiar, in elementary form, even to the younger children. And here is our first head-on encounter with the subject that most interests the family as a whole: education.

Your high-school freshmen and sophomores will profit from a discussion of the essay as a kind of writing, since their own compositions now, and all through high school and college, will take the essay form more often than any other. What is an essay? What does it try to do? How does it differ from each of the following kinds of writing, examples of which we have already read in the Family Plan: history, biography, geometry, philosophical dialogue, and fiction? How is an essay to be planned and constructed, and how

are its merits to be judged? This particular inquiry will be "sparked," not only by the reading of one or both of Montaigne's essays suggested here, but, in particular, by the first paragraph of the first selection to be read in the essay on education. In addition, the group should read, in Montaigne's prefatory note (Vol. 25, p. 1), the passage beginning, "Reader, thou hast here . . ." and ending, ". . . myself am the matter of my book. . . ."

As for Montaigne's views on education, they can doubtless best be grasped and analyzed by a thoroughgoing comparison of his proposals with the kind of education the younger members of the group are now getting, and the kind their parents got. There is no reason why, Montaigne's proposals having been set forth at the beginning of the discussion meeting, the whole conversation should not be devoted to this comparison, with a critical evaluation (both of Montaigne and of modern education) reserved for a second discussion of the book.

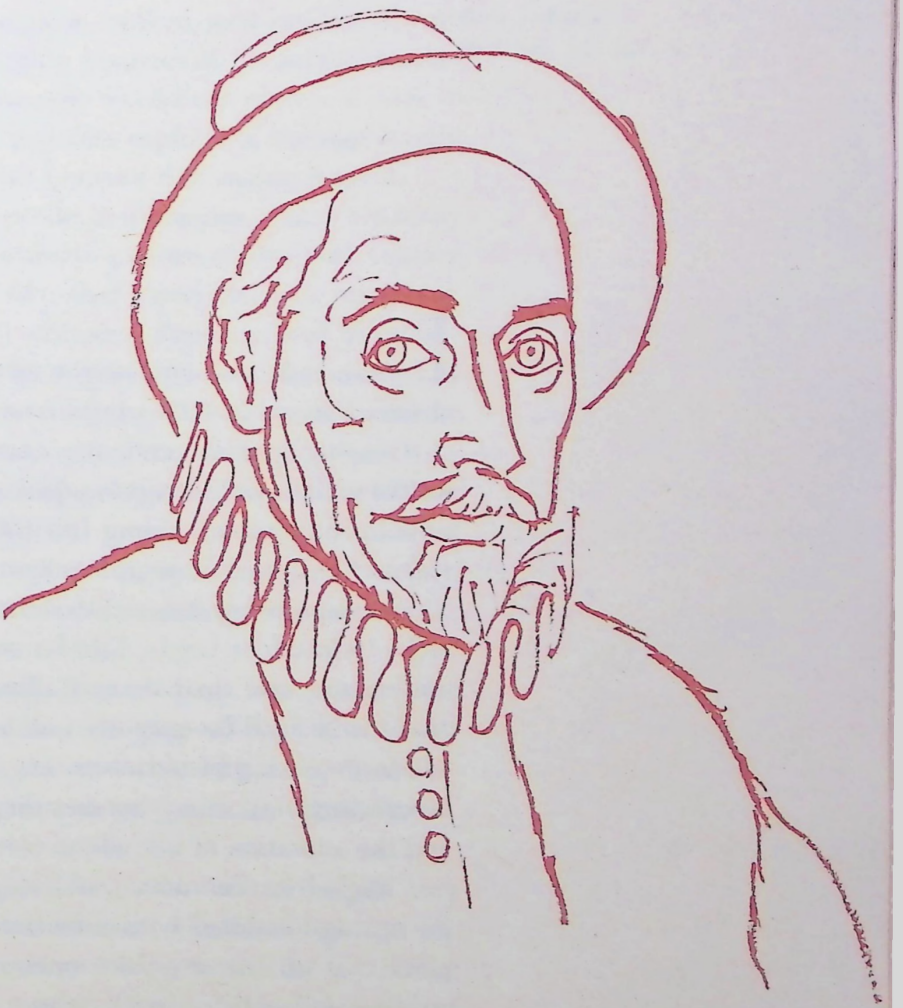
We might well approach the subject by asking how Montaigne would criticize the education—as a whole, and in each of its parts—that we are getting in high school now, or that our parents got a quarter of a century or so ago. What weight or merit would *he* give each of *our* school activities, curricular and extracurricular? How would he change our present system?

What, according to this great sixteenth-century Frenchman, is the purpose of education? What is its aim? How is it achieved? What methods are best—and what worst—and what subject matter should be given priority? What materials should be used? What should be the general atmosphere of a school?

Do our schools teach us—as Montaigne would—always to doubt? Is doubt always a good thing? What *kinds* of things can be doubted, and what, if anything, taken as certain? Should you doubt a physician's orders or a pharmacist's prescription, or a red traffic light, or a parent's or teacher's instructions as to homework, or household chores, or diet, or manners, or dress? Should nothing be accepted on authority, according to Montaigne? According to us? What do our elders—or the wise men of the past—know that we should take unquestioningly? Anything?

The most important of all subjects is, according to Montaigne, philosophy. Just what is philosophy? Is it certain knowledge, or is it to be doubted? What is its purpose? How does it compare with the other subjects proper to education? What are its results? Exactly how does it affect our lives and our behavior, according to the essayist? Does it in fact? How do we learn to be temperate? How do we acquire good habits—the "virtues"—and spurn the bad ones? What, according to Montaigne, is "the most manifest sign of wisdom"? How is it come by? How is it retained?

Montaigne wants philosophy taught to young people, "to instruct us to live." We have, he says, only the first fifteen or sixteen years of our lives for education; the rest is spent in action (p. 72b). Does philosophy really instruct us to live? Does experience count for nothing? Can a young person, simply by studying the right things in the right way, fully prepare himself for all the trials of life, so that, in advance of them, he may be sure that he will always meet them rightly? And, conversely, is there no point in an older person's study of philosophy? Can *he* get nothing of benefit from it? A little benefit? Less—or more—than a young person?



Cervantes

Don Quixote

Recommended reading
Chapters 1-10
in Vol. 29, pp. 1-26

If there had been any knight errantry left in the world, the publication of *Don Quixote* in 1605 would have killed it instantly. For Cervantes' story of the aging Spanish gentleman crazed by the reading of chivalric romances set the whole world laughing. We are laughing still, and "the knight of the rueful countenance," riding full tilt at windmills, avenging all the world's real and imagined wrongs, is a figure that has no rival in literature.

In the century before Cervantes' time, the tales of knight errantry had had a tremendous vogue. Life for most Europeans was relentlessly hard and unromantic, and their dreams alone made it worth living. Whoever could read—or be read to—greedily imbibed the accounts of the knights who sallied forth seeking heroic adventure, having pledged themselves to their ladyloves to fight injustice wherever they found it, to their own everlasting glory and the adoration of her whose colors they carried.

Miguel de Cervantes, soldier, poet, and civil servant, dogged by misfortune and saddled with financial burdens, undertook to write a popular parody of all this exquisite nonsense. Without any of the bitterness and cruelty of Jonathan Swift (whose *Gulliver's Travels* is the seventh- and eighth-grade readings), Cervantes exposes all the follies and conceits of mankind in the person of his addled knight, the intrepid Quixote.

One of the first topics that appears for family discussion—especially in connection with *Gulliver*—takes the form of the question: What did Cervantes think of human nature? Did he believe that man was childish,

stupid, vile, simple-minded, gullible, lovable, honorable, heroic, cowardly, venal?

The book is full of clues, not the least important of which are the common people's proverbs that fall so readily from the lips of the shrewd and deluded peasant turned "squire," Sancho Panza, future governor of one of the islands his master is going to conquer. Again, if the family has discussed the Book of Proverbs in the seventh- and eighth-grade Bible assignment, a comparison between the wisdom of Solomon and that of Sancho is in order. Which of them knew people better?

Why is *Don Quixote* a world masterpiece, ranked, as it so often is, with Shakespeare and Dante? Certainly not only because of its ludicrous anecdotes and its equally ludicrous hero. Comedy would not elevate a book to such heights. What else is there in the hopeless exploits of the mad knight of La Mancha? What is there about *Don Quixote* that makes it great?

Here is a subject the family might probe in discussion. There are many possible views. The book gives us an intimate picture of sixteenth-century Spain and of post-medieval European life; that alone makes it important. In addition, it is, in its burlesque of the chivalric romances and of censorship (of the Don's library, in Chapter VI), a striking model of literary criticism. And its humor is more than comic in its amiable mockery of pretension and heroics.

Is this all? Or is there something deeper in *Don Quixote?* Let's look closer at the knight and his madness. It is—as it was then—a most peculiar form of madness. A *fixation.* Quixote is not simply crazy. He is, rather, "possessed," possessed of a hallucination. He believes that the unreal is real, and the real unreal.

Haven't we, somewhere in our Family Plan readings, encountered this phenomenon before? To be sure we have, in (of all places!) Euclid, where we considered whether mathematical concepts are real or illusory, and our discussion there took us to the same question about the "self-evident truths" of the Declaration of Independence.

Cervantes, then, has taken the topical, laughable insanity of his hero to present the eternal issue of reality and illusion. The family group may well pursue this issue. What is there, in our own experience, that we assume is real, but may, indeed, not be; and what, conversely, in the world of dream or imagination, may indeed be real? How unreal (or real) are beliefs or ideals? How unreal (or real) are *we* and the importance of our little lives and our ambitions and the riches and empires of this world?

One other thing. The world is filled with wrongs that any high-school student can see are wrongs. What should be done about them? How should

they be fought? The way Quixote fought them? If not, why not? And if not, then how? *Should they be fought at all?* Should we "go around looking for trouble" or, stumbling on it, get into it? Should we meddle with the world, or with other people's lives and problems?

Not all of the evils that Quixote attacked were like the famous windmills in Chapter VIII. The farmer who cheated his servant boy out of his wages and beat him was doing a *real* wrong; Don Quixote goes to the boy's rescue and, as soon as he rides away, the farmer resumes his beating, harder than ever. The meddlesome knight simply worsened the lot of the innocent sufferer. What is the moral of *that* story?

Shakespeare

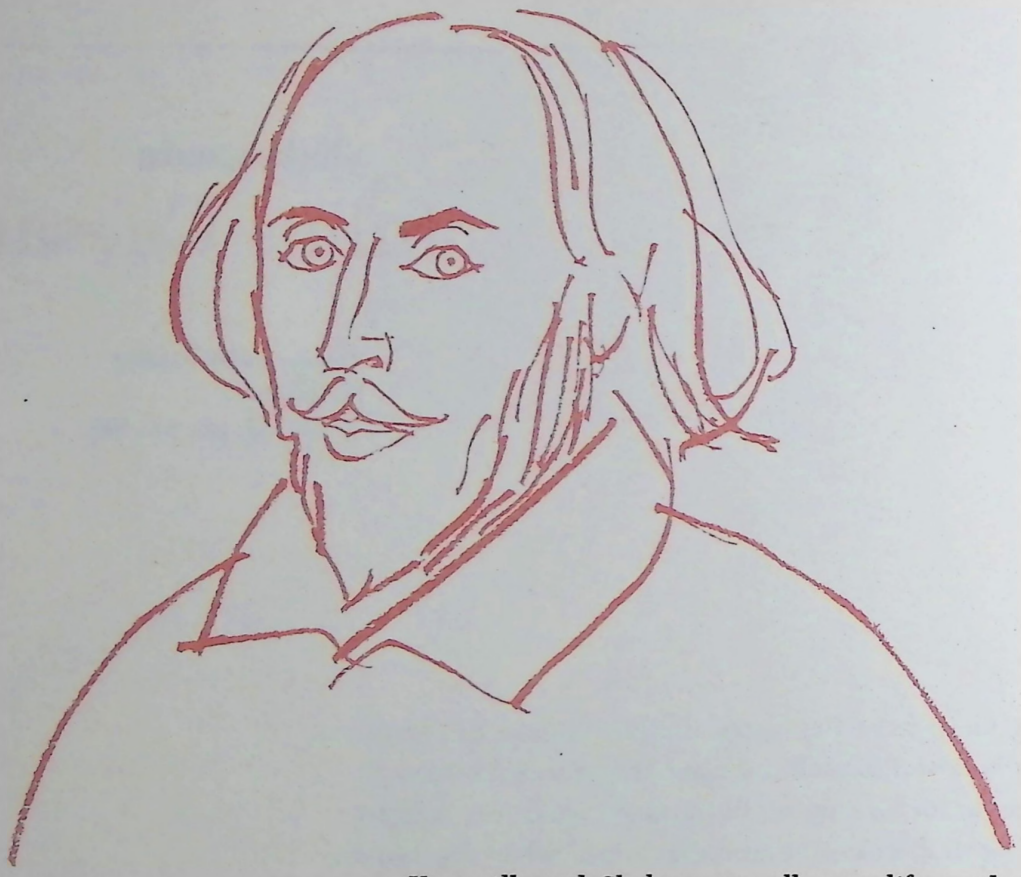
Julius Caesar

Recommended reading
Entire play
in Vol. 26, pp. 568-596

It may look like a big jump from Cervantes' droll account of the harmless old gentleman who believed himself a gallant knight to Shakespeare's story of the deadly struggle for an empire. But a single word may suggest that the jump is not as big as it looks—the word "quixotic," which has come into the English language from Cervantes' hero and which we use to mean (as the dictionary puts it) "ridiculously chivalrous or romantic; used also of any extravagance of scheme or notion." Can we find anything *quixotic* in Shakespeare's tragedy? In *all* tragedy?

Of all the *Great Books,* those most likely to be familiar to both young and old (except for the Bible) are the plays of William Shakespeare. There was a time when he was read in elementary school; even now it is amazing to hear (as we occasionally do) of a high school from which a student may be graduated without having read a single word of one of the greatest writers who ever lived.

You may have become familiar with him even before you entered high school, either in a book such as Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* or in the performance of one of his comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* You have known his name as far back as you can remember. Your parents may have taken you to a performance of the role that every actor dreams of playing—Hamlet. And, although you may never have read or heard Shakespeare, you use words, phrases, expressions of his every day; here was a man who shaped a language.



You will read Shakespeare all your life, and always reread him. His sonnets and his poems alone would have immortalized him, but his comedies, his tragedies, and his historical dramas are the "must" of the world's literature, in every age and in every land.

Julius Caesar is a tragedy based, certainly in part, on Plutarch's life of Caesar which the family group has just read and discussed. Unless we decide that *Don Quixote* is a tragedy—and that seems unlikely—this is the Family Plan's first meeting with tragic drama.

What is a tragedy? Is it simply a sad story, or one with an unhappy ending? Is the death of a newborn infant or a very old man a tragedy? Is "hard luck" tragic—losing a job, being hurt in an accident, having your house destroyed by fire? Is flunking in school a tragedy? Failing to make the team or the school paper or the honor roll? Losing your girl friend or boy friend to a rival?

Are these, any of them, the *worst* thing that can happen to a person?

When we read Sophocles' *Antigone* in the third- and fourth-year high school Family Plan—and there is no reason why the family should not go on to read it now—we shall inquire further into the nature of tragedy and the

tragic hero. In Caesar we can simply ask ourselves who the hero is (if there is one), what makes him heroic, what his failings are (if any), and what his failings have to do with the action of the play.

Julius Caesar is in part historical—a play about real people and real events. Could anything like it happen today? In what country? In ours? Is dictatorship necessarily bad? What if the people themselves want it? What if it "derives its just powers" (in the words of the Declaration of Independence) from "the consent of the governed"?

A great drama portrays character and its development. What kind of man was Cassius? Brutus? Antony? Which, if any of them, were good men, bad men? Does the character of any of them change? What would you have done had you been Brutus? Should he have joined the conspiracy to kill Caesar? Should he have agreed to kill Antony along with Caesar?

Who does more harm in the play, the good men or the bad men? Does good or evil triumph? Think back, now, to Don Quixote's attempt to help the servant boy who was being beaten by his master, and see if you can see any parallel with *Julius Caesar*. Is there anything *quixotic* in the behavior of Shakespeare's characters?

Guide III

Third and fourth year high school

1
Plato: *Apology*

2
Sophocles: *Antigone*

3
Lucretius: *On the Nature of Things*

4
Augustine: *Confessions*

5
Mill: *On Liberty*

6
James: *Principles of Psychology*

Plato

Apology

Recommended reading
All of the *Apology*
in Vol. 7, pp. 200–212

We have met Socrates before, in the seventh- and eighth-grade reading from Plato's *Republic*. There we found him surrounded by friends—young men who enjoyed contradicting and being contradicted, who enjoyed the master's gentle genius for pricking the balloons of wisdom flown by their elders. In the *Apology* we meet him under radically different circumstances—surrounded not by his friends, but by his enemies—by those same elders his questions about justice and injustice had so often embarrassed.

Athens' most famous citizen is on trial for his life. This is one of the great occasions of human history.

Are there two Socrateses—the teacher who does nothing but ask questions and the man who stands before his judges and, no longer asking questions, gives the answers?

The *Apology*—or explanation of his life—is a courtroom drama involving the defense of a man who, alive, haunted his generation and who, dead, has gone on haunting all the succeeding generations of men. A fat, ragged old man, utterly indifferent to appearances, more ludicrous to look upon than Cervantes' Don Quixote, Socrates stands unarmed and alone and (like Caesar and Alexander!) defies the whole world.

Exactly what were the charges against him? What had he done? Does it seem reasonable that a man who did nothing but *talk* should be accused of subverting the state? Could such a thing happen nowadays, here or elsewhere?

What was his defense? How does he answer each charge? Are his answers convincing? Here was the cleverest man in Athens. Couldn't he

have made a better defense? Couldn't he have "beaten the rap" if he had had a good lawyer?

His judges seem to have divided almost equally on the question of his guilt. He was then allowed to propose a penalty. What penalty did he propose? Was it serious? Was it reasonable for a man convicted of what we would call treason? Was he being bullheaded? Couldn't he have suggested a compromise, like exile or the promise to stop teaching? Wouldn't you have?

The *Apology,* and the *Crito* where we meet him in the death cell, pose the hard problem of man's relations to the state and the still harder problem of man's *and* the state's relation to God. Did Socrates solve these problems? Have we?

"Men of Athens, I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you . . ." (p. 206b). He says he will violate the law of the state on the basis of an "inner voice" which no one else hears, the voice of conscience or the voice of God. This voice is in open conflict with the voice of the people. Unless we decide that the voice of the people *is* the voice of God—is it?—we must decide, with Socrates' judges, which of the two a man must heed. Would we acquit a man whose "inner voice" permitted him to rob a savings bank? How can we say that Socrates or any man who disobeys the law—any law—is innocent without, at the same time, upholding anarchy? If the law does not decide guilt and innocence, what does?

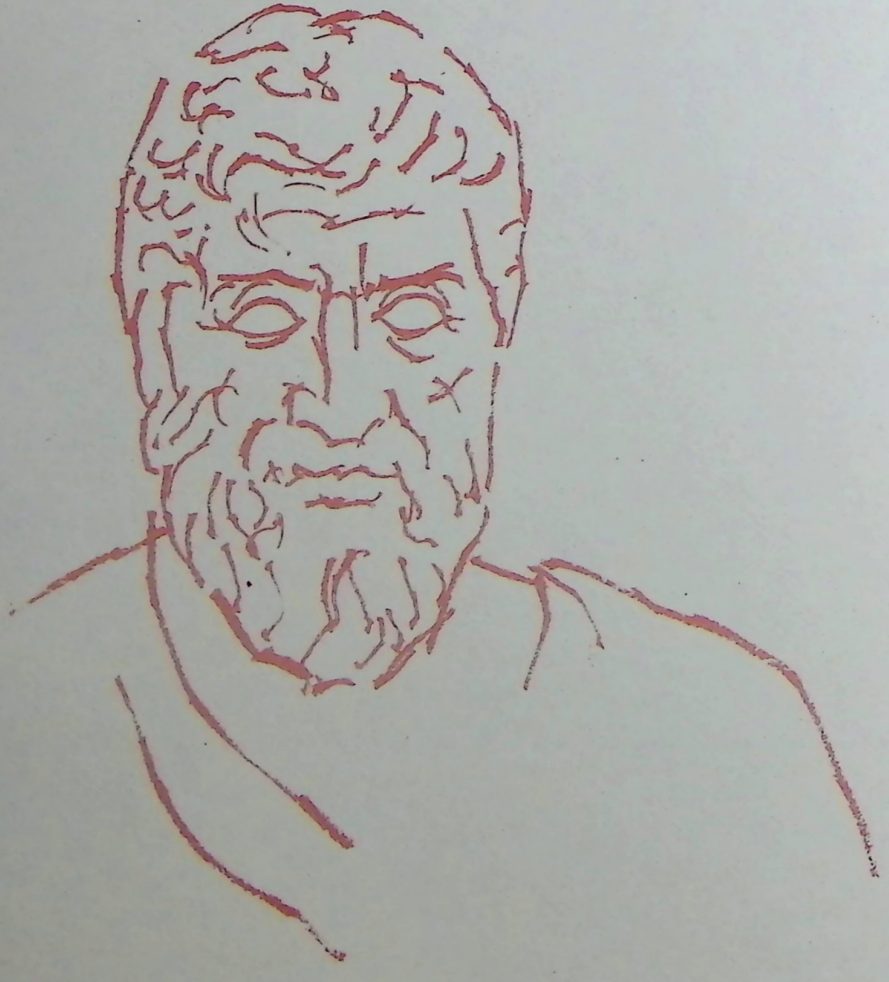
And yet—there may be bad laws. Should a good man obey them? Would he be a good citizen if he did? We have already met Jefferson and his compatriots—"anarchists" all—in the seventh- and eighth-grade reading of the Declaration of Independence. In our next reading, *Antigone,* we meet another individual who defends the right to defy the state.

As he tells us in the *Apology,* Socrates in his time defied both tyranny and democracy. He had no respect for either the powerful few or the powerful many. Although no voice has ever been raised more eloquently than his in defense of the individual, he was no democrat in the free and easy sense of the term. It was a democracy that killed Socrates—and that died in the process. Greek civilization never recovered from this old man's death.

Could he have talked the way he talked and lived differently? It has been said that the "gadfly of Athens"—the "pest" who "stung" men's minds into action—might have gone on being a *professor* of philosophy but that he chose instead to be a philosopher, living and dying as he thought and taught. Socrates left behind him a vision—unrealistic, impractical, suicidal, or utopian, maybe; but never cowardly, intemperate, hypocritical, or unjust.

The ages have asked: What was he trying to do? What was he "after"? He tells us: ". . . and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet . . ." (p. 206b). Two thousand years later he still has life and strength; he still practices and teaches philosophy; he still exhorts anyone whom he meets, and he meets millions. He will go on meeting millions as long as the great conversation which he began finds participants.

Socrates was seventy when he was convicted and condemned. It would appear that he could have been acquitted (or at least less severely dealt with) if it hadn't been for his "Yankee cussedness." Some think that his behavior in court can be adequately explained as the manifestation of a "martyr complex." Others hold that he was willing to die because he did not have long to live in any case. (This view, however, is usually advanced only by young people.) Maybe he was just trading a year or two of time for immortality. But maybe he was trying to make a point—a point that could not have been made had he lived and died differently.



Sophocles

Antigone

Recommended reading
Entire play
in Vol. 5, pp. 131-142

Socrates *does* suffer the death penalty, as we know. (The moving account of his last hours is given in Plato's *Phaedo,* which we read in a subsequent Family Plan.) Is his death a tragedy? Was Caesar's in Shakespeare? Brutus'?

The family group discussed the question of tragedy in *Julius Caesar,* in the first- and second-year high school readings. Now we may probe it a little more deeply and inquire into its connections with good and evil, happiness and misery, reward and punishment.

There are two obvious ways to look at the subject: first, at the tragic spectacle (a play, a story, a presentation), and second, at tragedy itself in real life. *Antigone* is, of course, one of the greatest of tragic dramas, like *Oedipus the King* (by the same author) and *Hamlet.* Three Greek tragic poets—Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides—stand with Shakespeare, and the four of them are in a class by themselves. One of the most interesting of all questions about tragedy is, why do the works of these four men, whose heroes were all kings, queens, and princes, continue to outshine all other tragedies in an age in which royalty has as good as vanished and audiences consist of the "common man"? Why are *we* so profoundly affected by what happens to a king or a princess?

To pursue this question, it would be a good idea for the family discussion meeting to take Volume 9 of the *Great Books* from the shelf and make the acquaintance, briefly, of that greatest of thinkers, Aristotle. On p. 687c–d of the *Poetics* he speaks of the nature of tragedy (as a spectacle), its plot and its purpose, and the kind of character best suited for the person of the

tragic hero. The passage beginning, "Three forms . . ." and ending, ". . . of similar families" can be discussed with special reference to the use of royalty as tragic heroes, and then we can turn to *Antigone*.

Who is the hero of *Antigone*, or is there one? Aristotle says that the tragic hero must be an ordinarily good man ruined by some "error of judgment," the famous "tragic flaw." If the "flaw" is necessary, we can eliminate all the *accidental* misfortunes mentioned in our discussion of *Julius Caesar* —the loss of one's job, the burning of one's house, etc. All of the things the insurance companies call "acts of God" can be discarded as causes of tragedy, since they come upon us from outside and strike without reference to our individual characters, our goodness or our badness. In regard to such events we could not have *chosen* differently. Tragedy seems to have to do with choice—with the power that *we* have over events. It must be something that, had we decided to act differently, could have been avoided.

The question of the role of fate and destiny in our lives comes up as we read and discuss *Antigone*. The chorus is especially preoccupied with fate. We find Creon relenting (too late) and saying, "We must not wage a vain war with destiny" (p. 140c).

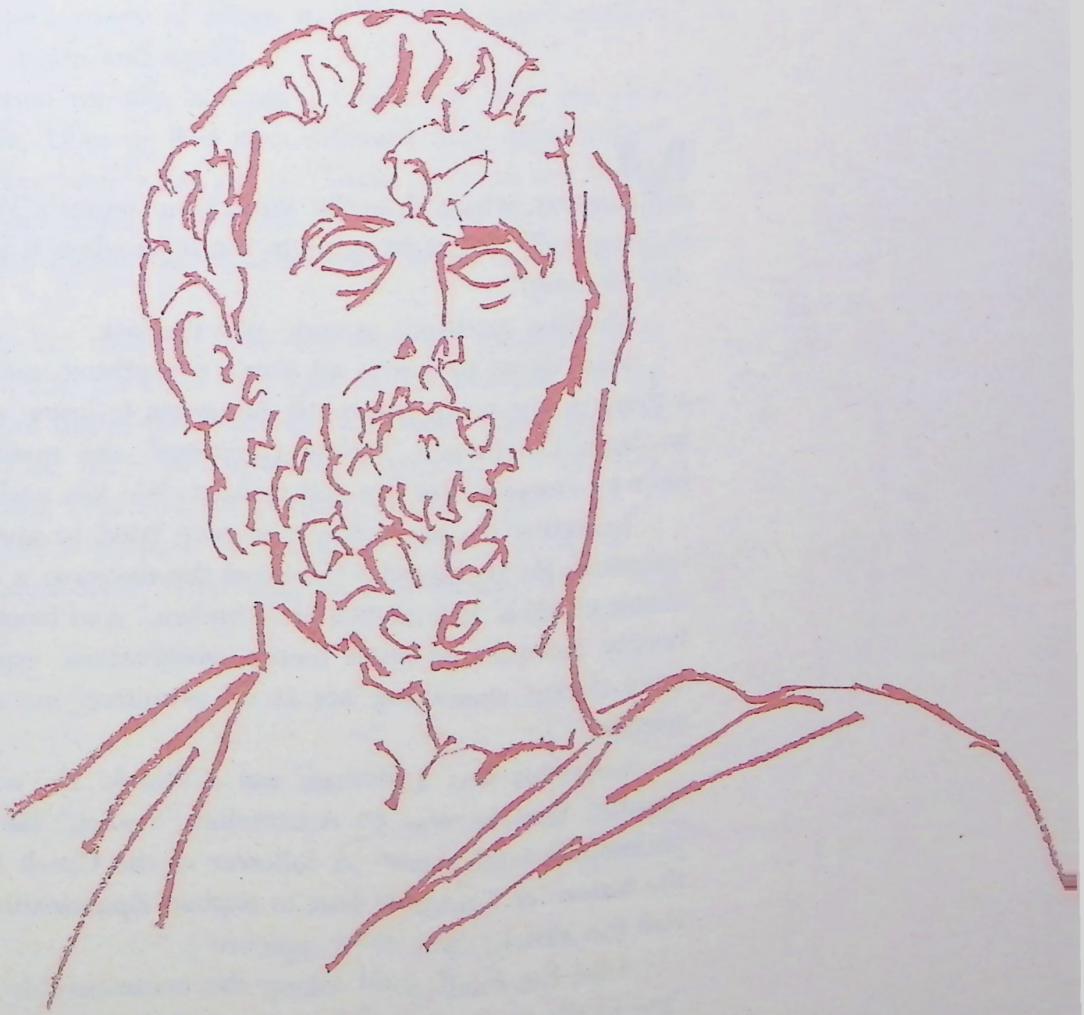
What is fate? Is there any such thing? Are we predestined—whatever we choose to do—to do certain things and suffer certain consequences? How *free* are we to do what we want to do, to be what we want to be? Why does the tragic spectacle, according to Aristotle, arouse "fear and pity" in us, especially fear? Must *we* make the same mistakes the actors have made? Will fate inevitably find our weakness or "flaw" and, through it, bring about our downfall?

Is life tragic? All life? Is there an "error of judgment," a "fatal flaw," in the nature of everyone? Assuming that we can escape fate (if there is such a thing) or accident (is accident the same as fate?), are we then safe from tragedy? What did Antigone do wrong? What was her flaw? What was Creon's? Brutus'? Or—if the family has done the first- and second-year high school readings—Caesar's and Alexander's in Plutarch's *Lives*? Was either Creon or Antigone unjust? Did either (or both) disobey the law? If so, which law? Why?

Does education enable us to escape tragedy? Is there less tragedy among the learned or the unlearned? Do any of the characters in *Antigone* make a mistake they could have avoided if they had had more knowledge? Was any one of them stupid? At one point (p. 134b) the chorus says: "Cunning beyond fancy's dream is the fertile skill which brings him, now to evil, now to good." Is it better, then, not to be cunning, to be simple-minded? But the same chorus says at the close of the tragedy:

Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness;
And reverence towards the gods must be inviolate.
Great words of prideful men are ever punished with
Great blows, and, in old age, teach the chastened to
Be wise.

Is wisdom, then, the means of escaping tragedy? What is wisdom? What did Socrates think it is? Is it different from cunning, from skill, from knowledge? How is it acquired? Did Socrates have it? Is he a tragic hero? Which can be more tragic—to die or to go on living? What has pride to do with tragedy?



Lucretius

On the Nature of Things

Recommended reading
Books I-II
in Vol. 12, pp. 1-30

Mommy, where does the world come from?" "What are the stars made of, Mommy?" "What happens to the light when it goes out?" "Why do we die, Mommy?"

The first questions we ask—and the last.

Man wants to know all about everything, and the more mysterious a thing is, the more insistently he wants to know about it. After a while, we learn not to ask "foolish questions"—the questions to which adults have no answers. But we still wonder. We live and die wondering.

Lucretius is one of the men who tried to answer the unanswerable questions. He perfected a theory of the universe, a "cosmology," primitive, almost childish. It is known as "atomism." And from this theory grew, over twenty centuries of more theory, observation, experimentation, and still more theory, something not at all primitive, not at all childish: atomic science.

Lucretius was a Roman, not a Greek. He was more of a Platonic "mystic" than he was an Aristotelian "realist." He was a scientist *and* a philosopher—and a poet. A follower of the Greek Epicurus, he wrote *On the Nature of Things* in part to explain Epicureanism (from which we derive the loosely used word "epicure").

Like the small child asking the unanswerable questions, he wants to "get to the bottom" of things, to what the philosophers call "first causes." And it may be appropriate here for the family to ask whether in fact he does—or whether his doctrine *has* any first causes in it. Nothing, he says

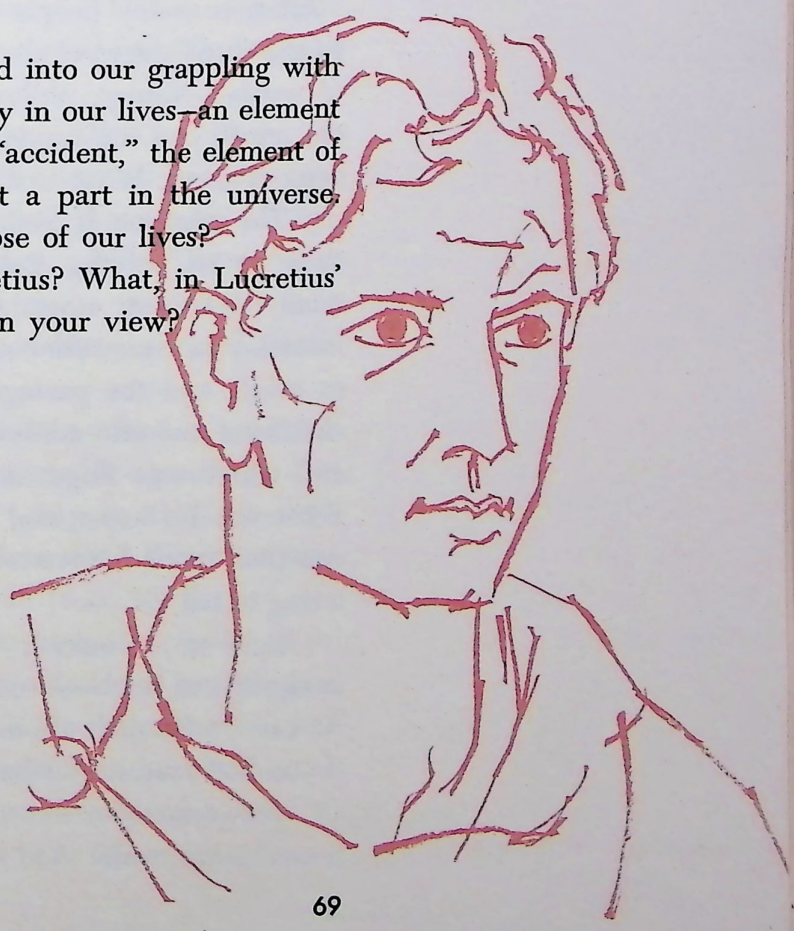
(p. 3a), can come from nothing; nothing is *created* in the sense that God created the world or (a point the seventh- and eighth-grade family group considered) that "all men are created equal." Can there be things without a beginning? Without creation? If so, what, and how do they come to be, when "nothing comes from nothing"?

All of the most difficult concepts the mind can confront—however short the words are—appear in Lucretius' prose poem. Not only *cause* and *creation,* but *motion, change, element, matter, man, space, world, nature, time, infinity, eternity, sense, soul, God, knowledge, idea, love, life, death.* These words represent the deepst ideas there are, the bedrock pillars of all thought. You won't find any agreement as to their meaning, either among the writers or yourselves, because these deceptively common terms embody a vast and complex range of ideas. And in every great work of the mind we meet them again and again.

In discussing Lucretius we are, naturally, concerned with his view of man and of human life. Does he find man different from other things? What, in Lucretius, makes man what he is? Think back to our family discussion of Sophocles and consider whether, in Lucretius, man has any freedom, any power within himself to do as he wills. What is the relation of the gods to men?

Let us introduce into our thinking here—and into our grappling with the ideas of will and fate, and the roles they play in our lives—an element we have touched on before under the name of "accident," the element of chance, which, in Lucretius, plays so important a part in the universe. How does chance affect our lives and the purpose of our lives?

Does life, indeed, have a purpose in Lucretius? What, in Lucretius' view, is the way men should live? Why? And in your view?



Augustine

Confessions

Recommended reading
Book I
in Vol. 18, pp. 1-9
and a selection from Book II
in Vol. 18, pp. 10d-13a

This, to many people today, is the strangest of all the *Great Books.* In the three stages of the Family Plan, we have met many kinds or forms of writing—history, philosophy, science, mathematics, biography, poetry, the novel, and the tragic drama. But the *Confessions* of St. Augustine is none of these. What is it?

The question is perhaps unfair, on the basis of the two short selections we are reading. But it may be useful, nevertheless, to ask it in the family discussion meeting. One answer that comes to mind—and not an incorrect answer, either—is that it is an autobiography. The title suggests as much, and the passages we read take the author from birth through childhood and into adolescence. But what a strange autobiography! When and where was Augustine born? Who were his neighbors and friends? What was his home like, and what was his father's occupation? How big was their family? Not a word about any of these things. What is Augustine trying to tell us?

Let's try to answer the question from our reading of the very first paragraph of the book—or the first several paragraphs, through the words, "O Lord, who shall abide it?" (p. 2c). What would you say this book was, if you had read no further? For whom is it written? *Who is its audience?*

But—remember the title. To whom, in the religious sense of the term, is confession made? And what (again in the religious sense) is a confession

of? Of a crime, a violation of the laws of the state? No. Of course: it is a confession of sin. What is the difference between sin and crime? Is every crime a sin? Is every sin a crime? How is guilt or innocence of crime established? Of sin? Who determines what constitutes a crime? A sin? How is each punished, and by whom?

Is there such a thing as sin? How do you know?

Augustine, Bishop of Carthage, is one of the dominant names in Christian theology and a figure of no less consequence in Western philosophy. We discover, as we read the whole of the *Confessions* how learned a personage he was and what high rank he attained as a scholar and teacher, and how, all the while, he suffered the agonies of the spirit indicated in the selections we read in the Family Plan. It is only at the end of Book VIII—he has long since mastered all the learning of his age—that he finds inward peace, when he becomes a Christian. His experience raises the whole question anew that we met in Sophocles: what is cunning, what is knowledge, what is wisdom, and are they the keys to happiness?

Here we see him in his infancy and childhood. The family should review his education—its content, its method, and its purpose. How would you compare it with your own? What did he think of his studies? Which did he prefer, and why? How do you evaluate yours? Which do you think are the most useful, and for what? Was he a good student? Why, or why not? And you?

But these are secondary matters. His preoccupation is always sin. Was he right to be so preoccupied? Are you? Why was his baptism postponed, and what does he think of its postponement? Why, in his old age, is he bothered about it? Did he think he sinned as a baby? How? What was the sin of his boyhood, and why did he think he was no greater a sinner than grownups? Why was he beaten? Should he have been? Should you be?

The great crisis of his childhood—he was of high-school age when it occurred—is the classic incident of the theft of the inedible pears (pp. 10c-11b). Why did he take them? Why did he think this petty theft of worthless fruit a sin? Why was he tormented by it all his life? Why does anyone commit a crime? What factors influenced him to do it?

Augustine's theft of the pears is one of the historic episodes of all moral philosophy. We are greatly concerned these days with juvenile (and adult) delinquency. What concerns us, and mystifies the experts, is the fact that so many offenses occur *without a reason.* Obviously needy individuals are no more frequently involved than children and adults who "have no excuse" for their antisocial behavior.

In such cases the authorities are baffled by the explanation that the crime was committed "for the fun of it" or for "kicks." Underneath the explanation, the question remains: Why? Do people want to break the law? Do they want to do wrong for the sake of doing wrong, and not for any further end? *Does this mean that it is our nature to love evil?* What did Augustine think? What do you think?

Mill

On Liberty

Recommended reading
Chapt. 2
in Vol. 43, pp. 274-293

If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

Mill, *On Liberty*, page 274c

One person—Socrates standing alone against Athens, Antigone against the king of Thebes, the traditional dissenter down the ages, the naysayer, the "enemy of the people," from Jesus to John Brown. What's to be done with him?

Is there any good reason why he should be tolerated? And are there not good reasons—national security, for instance—why he should not be tolerated?

This hundred-year-old plea for liberty, written by one of the great masters of the English language, is as up-to-date as today's newspaper. The continuing world crisis of the last few decades confronts everyone with the question: What is liberty? How much of it can we afford? When does it endanger the state? How far should we go, in the name of security, to restrict the individual?

We live in a period characterized, on the one hand, by "alarums and excursions" against subversive doctrines, subversive talk, and subversive association, and, on the other, of equally loud alarums and excursions against a stultifying uniformity induced by our fear of subversion. New and unprecedented laws have been passed, legislatures have conducted sensational hearings, patriotic organizations and newspapers have all joined the controversy; many individuals and groups have defied both laws and legislatures on the ground that they violate freedom of speech, press, assembly, or worship, and in many cases the courts have agreed.

What is liberty? What is it for?

In the seventh- and eighth-grade Family Plan readings we met the writers of the Declaration of Independence. We heard them assert that men are "endowed by the Creator with . . . liberty" and that liberty is "unalienable"; it cannot rightfully be taken from a man.

What is this unalienable liberty? Is it the liberty to rob or cheat, to maim or murder? To pay no taxes or refuse jury duty? To leave the scene of an accident or to cry out "Fire!" in a crowded theater? To conspire to overthrow the government? To betray military secrets?

John Stuart Mill is a thoroughly modern mind. He sees human history as a course of progress from a lower to an ever higher condition. In general, the ancients saw history as a repetitive affair. Which is it? Has mankind made progress? Are we better off than our first ancestors? Than our grandparents? How—or how not?

In the introductory chapter of this treatise (pp. 267a-274a) the author asserts that the liberty of the individual, traditionally threatened by a powerful ruler or a powerful few, is now at the mercy of a new and more ruthless tyrant: society at large. Where the people *are* the government, Mill says that individual freedom is likely to be crushed by "the tyranny of the majority." The rest of the essay is an eloquent argument for the liberty of minorities, even of a minority of one against all.

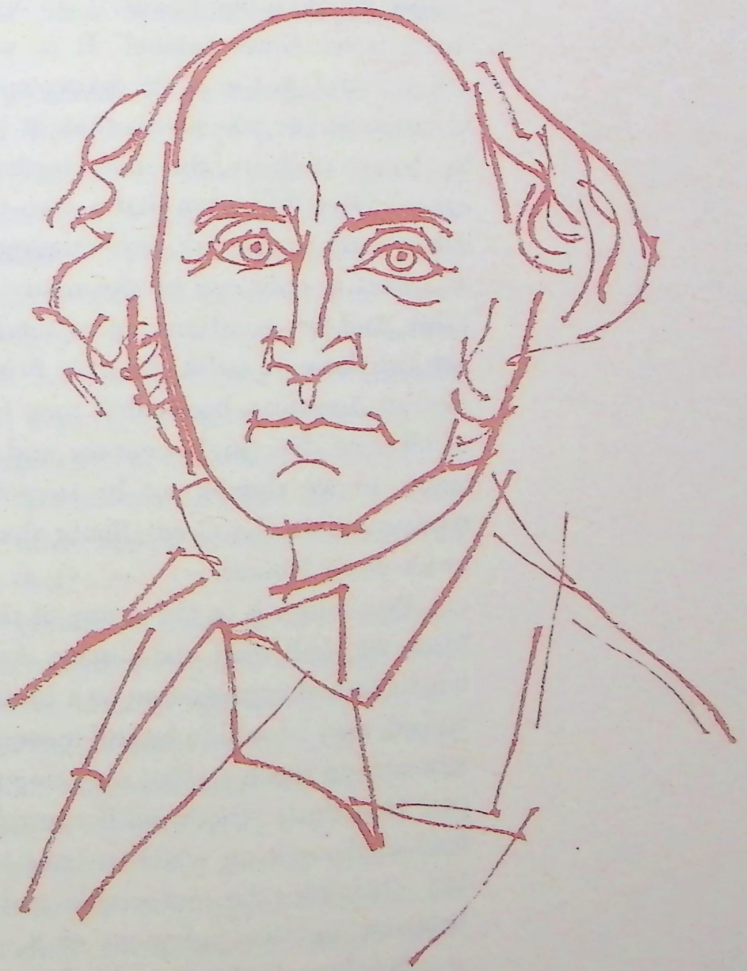
How much liberty is "unalienable," according to Mill? What rights do men have that are absolutely outside the power of society or government? Conversely, what restrictions on individual liberty may society rightfully impose and why? Where *exactly* does Mill place the boundary between the two?

As far as thought and discussion go, any restriction is, he says, an "assumption of infallibility." The truth in *any* matter is not so certainly known that we dare suppress the liberty to argue it or attack the prevailing opinion. In the first- and second-year high school readings of Euclid and *Don Quixote,* we raised the question of the certainty of our knowledge; Mill adduces three immortal examples of society's repression of liberty at fearful cost to itself—the silencing of Socrates, of Jesus, and of the early Christians by Marcus Aurelius (whose *Meditations* appear in Volume 12 of the *Great Books*).

The right to speak—however unpopularly—and the duty to listen, Mill defends from two opposite standpoints. The unpopular doctrine may be true, or it may be false. What are his reasons, in each case, for insisting that society should listen to it? And how are we to determine whether it *is* true or false, always remembering that, in Mill's view, there is no such thing as certainty?

Unless what we believe is subjected to constant and searching criticism, our belief in it is meaningless, untested. On p. 286d he maintains that most Christians hold their faith in this way and that their religion was stronger when it was persecuted by the majority instead of being accepted by almost all.

In the passage (p. 284b) beginning, "He who knows . . ." through the words ". . . removes that difficulty . . ." he insists that we must have our most cherished beliefs challenged by persons who really believe the contrary. Should a Communist have the right to advocate his doctrine in non-Communist countries? To teach in the schools? To speak in public halls and call for the overthrow of the government? Should an anti-Communist have the same right in Russia? What would Mill say? What would you say?



James

Principles of Psychology

Recommended reading
Chapt. IV, "Habit"
in Vol. 53, pp. 68–83

Habit, we say, is second nature. But the great psychologist with whose treatise we close our Family Plan agrees with the Duke of Wellington that "habit is ten times nature!" It is, says James, "the enormous fly-wheel of society," and, in the poetic paragraph (p. 79) that begins with those words, he comes to the conclusion that "it is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again." Does this mean that a man can't change, that, at some point in our lives, we are, so to speak, either damned or saved?

That is only one of the many questions raised by James's theory of habit. And the questions are so fundamental and so brilliantly argued (and not just those on habit) that his *Principles of Psychology* is one of the few modern American books that may be safely ranked with the masterpieces of all time. No single century and no single country has produced very many, so we should not be surprised that America is no more heavily represented in the *Great Books* than any other time or place in the centuries since Homer.

Psychology is as old as any of the basic sciences—in subsequent Family Plans we shall read and discuss Aristotle on this same subject of habit—but its formal organization as a branch of learning is relatively recent, and, indeed, may be said to be still incomplete. It is peculiar among the "natural" sciences—so much so that only one part of it is classified among them, the part that deals strictly with controlled observation. As a whole, it is the field of thought on which science and philosophy meet—the tangible and the intangible, the measurable and the immeasurable, the description of behavior and the judgment of it.

Nowhere is this two-sidedness of psychology clearer than in James's analysis of habit. The first part of the chapter we read deals with the na-

ture of habit as such, the second with moral habit or, in the author's words, "the ethical implications of the law of habit." It is as if an anatomist and then a poet or theologian were to describe man.

How, if at all, does James seem to think that man differs from other animals? How does he distinguish habit and instinct, and the role of reason in each of them? Does there appear to be a different relationship, stated or implied, between man and the other animals in the two parts of the chapter on habit?

Probably the family will want first to take up the consideration of habit itself. What makes habit possible? What makes change of habit possible? Can an organic individual be changed completely by a change of habits? How are habits formed? Broken? Why is habituation easier in growing than in full-grown organisms? What does it mean to say that "we learn to swim during the winter and to skate during the summer?" (p. 71). What would life be like without habit? How do you decide which shoe to put on first?

All of the foregoing questions are pertinent to the first part of James's treatise, on the essential nature of habit. Before we move on to the second, we should ask ourselves two questions. First, does there appear to be any habit that is not formed in the brain or through the nervous system, any habit that is not essentially physiological? To put it another way: Does James's analysis seem to account for every kind of habit we may have? And second, what causes a habit to *begin?* What is responsible for the very first motion of any act performed for the very first time? Another way of asking the same question: What does *A,* the second word on p. 75, represent? Or, exactly what does *V* represent in the diagram on p. 76? Or, turning to p. 82 and the words, "Attention and effort are . . . but two names for the same psychic fact," what makes us make the effort to focus our attention on *this* rather than *that?*

As we move to the more familiar ground of habits in their ordinary moral sense of good and bad habits, a transitional question arises. Why, if habits are formed more easily in youth than in age, don't we simply habituate our children to do all the right things when they are very young, so that doing right becomes so "set" that they will never do wrong? On p. 80 James says, "The great thing, then, in all education, is to *make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy . . . For this we must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as we can.*" Why shouldn't parents, while the child is still "plastic," simply draw up a list of all the "useful" habits and train the child to them? Wouldn't this put an end—*in advance*—to all the troubles of this life and do away

with all necessity for morality and law? Or wouldn't it?

Are there any strictly volitionary acts, performed for the first time *without* habit? We asked this question earlier. Now, in connection with moral habits, we repeat it in terms of the will. Does the will—not just the wish, but the determination—to do something operate in the formation of a habit? Is there, in other words, any freedom of the will, or are all our acts simply a chain of nervous responses? A "useful" habit must begin somewhere, somehow, and on p. 77 James quotes Dr. Carpenter as saying that the mechanism of habit "works automatically under the general control and direction of the will." But where and what is the will, and what controls and directs *it?*

At the top of p. 76, the author depicts us hesitating, comparing, choosing, etc., in the performance of a single act, and in doing so we use "intellectual means." But he goes on to say that "in habitual action, on the contrary, the only impulse which the centres of idea or perception need send down is the initial impulse, the command to *start.*" But where does the initial impulse come from? What issues the command to *start?* Something outside us? An accidental disturbance of our nervous system? Or something that is, in greater or less degree, freely determined by us?

Once the family has clarified Professor Bain's distinction between moral and intellectual habits (at the bottom of p. 80), the discussion of forming good habits and breaking bad ones may proceed on the basis of Bain's "two great maxims" cited by James, and the two additional maxims which James himself adds on pp. 81 and 82. Are these maxims sound, in your own experience with your own habits? Are they sufficient? Let the members of the group bring up bad habits of their own that they would like to break, and good habits that they would like to form, and review them in the light of James's advice.

In the early pages of James's analysis, there appears to be no place for a special or peculiar power within us; we are told that "habits are due to the plasticity of materials to outward agents" (p. 70). But the closing pages seem to suggest that there *is* a power within us. The modern scientist sounds like the Greek chorus in Sophocles when he says that bad habits constitute "the hell *we make for ourselves* in this world" (p. 83, emphasis added). And the Great Ideas Program Family Plan cannot do better than to close on the plea that James makes (and that Socrates, Plutarch, and Montaigne might make) in the next sentence: "Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state."

Appendix

Guides to additional Family Plan readings

in the *Great Books of the Western World*

Seventh- and eighth-grade readings
page 83

First- and second-year high school readings
page 85

Third- and fourth-year high school readings
page 89

Additional readings in mathematics, science, and logic
page 93

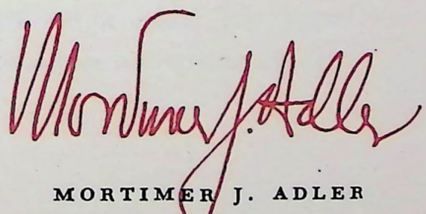
A note to the *Great Books* family

When you have completed the Family Participation Plan at any—or all—of the three grade levels, you will not want to stop. And one of the nice things about the Plan is that you do not have to stop. This Appendix contains a wide selection of works from which you can choose readings at the three grade levels and thus continue your reading and discussion.

Suggested additional readings in mathematics, science, and logic are listed separately, not because they are to be read and discussed apart from other kinds of writing, but because by this time you have discovered that such readings may be easier for your son in the seventh grade than for your daughter in the fourth year of high school—or for you!

You have already read and discussed Euclid (in the first- and second-year high school readings) and Lucretius and James (in the third- and fourth-year high school selections), so you are familiar with three distinct kinds of scientific writing. You have discovered that the greatest scientific works are, at bottom, profoundly philosophical and never merely technical. Perhaps you will want to approach these works in the Appendix by "sampling" them to determine, after reading a few paragraphs of each, at what grade level *your* family wants to read them. All of them are thoroughly comprehensible by any high-school junior or senior, and largely comprehensible by any freshman or sophomore. Some of them, you will find, can be fully understood by your seventh and eighth graders. The earlier the better!

Happy reading!



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I

Additional readings for seventh and eighth grades

(The family may wish, in addition to using the readings suggested below, to make further selections of its own from some of the books already read and discussed at this grade level—the *Odyssey, Proverbs,* Herodotus' *Histories,* and *Gulliver's Travels.*)

1. Plato: *Meno*

Recommended reading
All of the *Meno*
in Vol. 7, pp. 174-190

Can goodness be taught? Is it a kind of knowledge? Do we "figure it out" for ourselves, the way we do mathematical problems, or do we need something else besides knowing what goodness is and how to be good in order to be actually good men and women?

2. Plato: *Republic*

Recommended reading
Books VI and VII
in Vol. 7, pp. 373-401

What should we be taught in school? What do we most need to know in later life, when we shall be citizens or rulers? The famous allegory of the cave, in which people who have never seen the light mistake shadows for reality.

3. Virgil: *Aeneid*

Recommended reading
Books II and III
in Vol. 13, pp. 124-166

The story of the fall of Troy, the greatest of all ancient legends. Aeneas' wanderings afterward, as the destined founder of Rome. Aeneas and his adventures can be compared with Odysseus, another heroic veteran of the Trojan War.

4. Shakespeare: *Tempest*

Recommended reading

Entire play

in Vol. 27, pp. 524-548

Perhaps the most charming of all of Shakespeare's plays, set in a magic island and full of high adventure with a happy ending. The most suitable introduction of the young reader to the glorious world of Shakespeare.

II

Additional readings for first and second year high school

(In addition to using the readings suggested below, the family may wish to make further selections of its own from Plutarch's *Lives* and *Don Quixote,* already encountered at this grade level of the Family Plan.)

1. The Bible: Psalms

Recommended reading

Psalms 8, 23, 37, 74, 78, 103, 139

The Psalms are, of course, a part of the world's greatest poetry, and they may be read as such, specifically as songs or hymns of faith, hope, and love. Those selected here also raise all the great questions of human life—in man's terms and in God's.

2. Thucydides: *Peloponnesian War*

Recommended reading

Selections from Book V

in Vol. 6, pp. 504c-508a, c

The family has already read and discussed Pericles' Funeral Oration, in which the Athenians see themselves. Now we see them as history sees them—driven by the necessities of war to force their cause upon a small, neutral nation, the Melians, who resist them to the bitter end in a brilliantly portrayed scene. Query: How much has the world changed?

3. Dante: *The Divine Comedy*

Recommended reading

"Hell"

in Vol. 21, pp. 1-52

Especially discussible in terms of the Psalms (above) and *Paradise Lost* (below), and in connection with those readings which have raised the issues of virtue and vice and reward and punishment. The immortal account of Dante's visit to Hell.

4. Montaigne: *Essays*

Recommended reading
The essay "Of Custom . . . etc."
in Vol. 25, pp. 42-51
the essay "That it is Folly . . . etc."
in Vol. 25, pp. 80-82
and the essay "That the Relish of Good and Evil . . . etc."
in Vol. 25, pp. 115-125

Again we meet the great essayist, this time in the clearly skeptical role which we sometimes associate with science. Delightful to read, easy to discuss and to argue. Does Montaigne believe that anything is *absolutely* good or bad, right or wrong?

5. Shakespeare: *Hamlet*

Recommended reading
The entire play
in Vol. 27, pp. 29-72

6. Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

Recommended reading
The entire play
in Vol. 27, pp. 284-310

We have already read and discussed works of poetry, drama, and tragedy in the Family Plan. In *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* we meet the three art forms together at their mightiest. With kings we take the highroad of ambition, pride, jealousy, and vengeance—and find kings, like commoners, stumbling to destruction.

7. Milton: *Paradise Lost*

Recommended reading
The entire work
in Vol. 32, pp. 93-333

Like all of the longer readings suggested here, *Paradise Lost* may be read and discussed a section (in this case, a Book or two) at a time for several meetings. Milton's "Argument" at the head of each Book suggests discussion topics. This is the biblical story of the Fall, told by a sublime poet.

8. Locke: *Concerning Civil Government, Second Essay*

Recommended reading
The entire work
in Vol. 35, pp. 25-81

John Locke is the political philosopher of seventeenth-century England to whom the world is indebted for the idea of modern democracy expounded in this historic essay. To be read and argued closely as a basic course in political science. How does Locke's theory of government differ from ours? How does political theory work out in practice?

9. Fielding: *Tom Jones*

Recommended reading
The entire novel
in Vol. 37, pp. 1-405

This novel, one of the world's first and still one of its greatest, should be read by the children of the family over a Christmas or Easter vacation. It is long, but it isn't homework; the whole family will find it glorious reading, a tale of adventure and laughter, with a moral! To be discussed informally.

10. Smith: *Wealth of Nations*

Recommended reading
Book I
in Vol. 39, pp. 3-116

As Locke's *Second Essay* may be considered a basic course in political science, so the *Wealth of Nations* may be said to be a basic course in economics. The English "father of capitalism"—whose masterpiece was published the same year as the Declaration of Independence—has influenced Western thinking as much as Locke. In Smith, terms are used precisely and must be precisely defined, and the text followed very closely. The family will want to take its time with this book, comparing Smith's ideas with our own, and with competing economic theories like Socialism or Communism.

III
Additional readings for third and fourth year high school

(In addition to using the readings suggested below, the family may wish to read further in St. Augustine's *Confessions,* selections from Books I and II of which have already been read and discussed in the Family Plan. Books I through VIII of the *Confessions* are recommended.)

1. The Bible: Job

Here is the classic account of the just man who suffers the worst possible injustices. Why? Why do the good suffer and the wicked prosper? Job, in profound and magnificent poetry, is the biblical answer.

2. Sophocles: *Oedipus the King*

Recommended reading
The entire play
in Vol. 5, pp. 99-113

"The perfect tragedy" by the author of *Antigone,* which the family has already read. Aristotle, in his *Poetics,* uses *Oedipus* as the model of the tragic drama. The issue—as always—is the real nature of tragedy, its cause and its meaning, and the "tragic flaw" in the hero.

3. Plato: *Crito*

Recommended reading
All of the *Crito*
in Vol. 7, pp. 213-219

Socrates is in prison, under sentence of death. His friends have arranged his escape, and one of them, Crito, comes to tell him of their plans for this escape. What would you do if you, unjustly convicted, had a chance to escape? Socrates remains Socrates to the end.

4. Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*

Recommended reading
Book I
in Vol. 9, pp. 339-348

5. Aristotle: *Politics*

Recommended reading
Book I
in Vol. 9, pp. 445-455

Now we meet the first systematic philosopher, "the man who invented Western thought." Aristotle is radically different from his master, Plato; in the *Ethics* and *Politics* we find no whimsical old men arguing 'round and 'round. Often called the first real scientist, Aristotle writes with exhaustive—and exhausting—precision.

The issue in the *Ethics* is the happy man, and in the *Politics* it is the good state. What is happiness, and how is it to be achieved? What is virtue? Is its practice pleasant? Does the happy man *feel* good? As for the state, we begin by asking how it came into being. Is it natural or artificial? Why is this question important for Aristotle? Is slavery just? How should the economy be managed?

This introduction to the immense work of Aristotle requires at least two meetings of the family discussion group. The two readings should be done separately, and very closely, with every principal term defined as sharply as possible.

6. Tacitus: *Annals*

Recommended reading
Selections from Books XIV and XV
in Vol. 15, pp. 153d-155a, 172c-173d

The family will want to read more of Tacitus than these two short selections. With Plutarch, Thucydides, and Herodotus, Tacitus preserved the history of the ancient world for us, writing only a few years after the events. Here we see the degeneracy of Roman rule, in the very midst of its high culture, as the philosopher Seneca tries to save himself from the mad Nero, whose tutor he had been.

7. Marcus Aurelius: *Meditations*

Recommended reading
Book I
in Vol. 12, pp. 253a-256c

This singular emperor-philosopher reflects on the relative importance of the studies of his youth, on the relationship of education and the values of later life. Marcus may be read and discussed with endless profit and pleasure. The reading need not be limited to this selection.

8. Machiavelli: *The Prince*

Recommended reading
The entire work
in Vol. 23, pp. 3-37

A refreshing contrast to the loftiness of most moral philosophy. Here, in the "testbook for tyrants," is immorality incarnate, the medieval Florentine's recipe for influencing people—if not for winning friends. Do you find, beneath the "realistic" theory of power politics, any indication that Machiavelli nevertheless believed in honorable behavior?

9. Sterne: *Tristram Shandy*

Recommended reading
The entire work
in Vol. 36, pp. 191-556

Tristram Shandy cannot properly be called a novel; it is a high farce, delightfully written, unforgettable in its portrayal of droll characters. Another of the great books ideally suited to vacation reading, with the insights of an immortal writer into human nature and the life of eighteenth-century England.

10. Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

Recommended reading
Chapts. 15 and 16
in Vol. 40, pp. 179-234

One of the half-dozen foremost historians of all time, Edward Gibbon writes in these two chapters what he calls "a candid but rational inquiry" into the rise of Christianity in Rome. Always witty, and usually cruelly so, he paints a vigorous (if not always flattering) picture of the early church.

11. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay: *The Federalist*

Recommended reading

Numbers 1-10, 15, 31, 47, 51, and 68-72

in Vol. 43, pp. 29-53, 62-66, 103-105, 153-156, 162-165, 205-218

Three of the "founding fathers" of the United States argue for the adoption of the Constitution, in what were originally a series of newspaper articles addressed to the voters of the State of New York. Essential reading, not merely as political theory, but as fundamental to American history. Two or three sessions should be given to reading and discussing the authors' clearly delineated arguments for a strong federal union.

12. Dostoevsky: *The Brothers Karamazov*

Recommended reading

Chapt. 5

in Vol. 52, pp. 127-137

Parents and junior and senior high-school students alike will want to read the whole of this classic novel. It is one of the universally acknowledged masterpieces of the world's literature. This one chapter, "The Grand Inquisitor," may, however, be read independently. The powerful parable echoes Job's anguished cry to God, demanding that He justify His ways to man.

13. Melville: *Moby Dick*

Recommended reading

The entire novel

in Vol. 48, pp. 1-419

Ostensibly a rip-roaring novel of a great sea chase—Captain Ahab's fatal pursuit of the killer whale, Moby Dick—this story by a nineteenth-century American has achieved ever greater stature throughout the world as a symbolic account of man's struggle with the indomitable powers of the universe, here portrayed as the white whale. Ahab, maddened by vengefulness and driven by pride, is determined to pit everything, including other men's lives, against the world-roving Enemy.

IV
Additional readings in mathematics, science, and logic

1. Aristotle: *Physics*

Recommended reading
Selections from Book IV
in Vol. 8, Chapts. 1-4, pp. 287-291, on "Place";
Chapts. 6-7, pp. 292-294, on "Space";
Chapts. 10-13, pp. 297-302, on "Time."

Physics, for Aristotle, as for all the great early philosophers, is the basic comprehension of the physical universe. The concepts of place, space, and time (obvious as they seem to us laymen) are fundamental to that comprehension, and to the great chain of reasoning and experimentation that flowers in the visible marvels of the age we live in.

2. Hippocrates: *The Oath* and *On Ancient Medicine*

Recommended reading
All of both
in Vol. 10, pp. xiii, and 1-9

The Hippocratic Oath is still the oath of the medical profession—after more than two thousand years. *On Ancient Medicine* is traditionally the first work to try to separate medicine from philosophy, and to base conclusions in the field on observation. The "father of medicine" is also known as "the first physician."

3. Nicomachus of Gerasa: *Introduction to Arithmetic*

Recommended reading
Book I
Vol. 11, pp. 811-828

An ancient theory of numbers which treats numbers as the basis of all knowledge. Here, as in the case of Euclid, the seventh or eighth grader with a "mathematical mind" may outshine his elders.

4. Galileo: *Dialogues Concerning the Two New Sciences*

Recommended reading

The entire work

in Vol. 28, pp. 129-260

Another of the greatest thinkers of the ages whose materials and style combine to make him intelligible even to the seventh or eighth grader with a penchant for science. Indispensable for the high-school student of science, and highly readable by any layman. The work, written in dialogue style, deals with the actions of solid bodies under stress and with the physics of motion.

5. Harvey: *An Anatomical Disquisition on the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*

Recommended reading

The entire work

in Vol. 28, pp. 273-304

A masterly description of the method by which the functions of the heart and the blood were discovered. "Must" reading for any youngster interested in scientific experimentation, and both interesting and useful to any layman. High-school vocabulary adequate.

6. Descartes: *Discourse on Method*

Recommended reading

The entire work

in Vol. 31, pp. 41-67

Still another approach to the knotty concepts of "knowledge," "truth," "reality," problems already encountered in Plato, Euclid, Lucretius, Montaigne, and James. This treatise—none the less historic for its brevity—raises its own questions for the reader. Intelligible to any high-school junior or senior and to advanced younger students.

7. Newton: *Mathematical Principles of Philosophy*

Recommended reading

Selections

in Vol. 34, "Preface to the First Edition," pp. 1-2

"Definitions," pp. 5-13

"Axioms, or Laws of Motion," pp. 14-24
"System of the World," p. 269
"Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy," pp. 270-271
"General Scholium," pp. 369-372

After Euclid, Galileo, and Aristotle's *Physics,* the family will find no insuperable difficulties in these selections which present an abbreviated picture of the whole "Newtonian universe." One session can be profitably spent on the mathematical and physical theories and demonstrations, and a second on the relation of Newton's science to his philosophy and theology. All grade levels.

8. Lavoisier: *Elements of Chemistry*

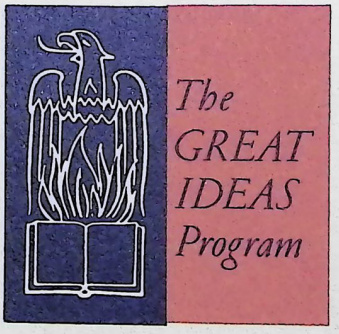
Recommended reading
The *Preface*
in Vol. 45, pp. 1-7

Lavoisier's *Preface* is a work in logic rather than chemistry. Its substance is a theory of the necessary connection between language and reasoning. Highly suitable for high-school juniors and seniors, and for advanced freshmen and sophomores.

9. Darwin: *Origin of Species*

Recommended reading
Selected chapters
in Vol. 49, Chapt. I, "Variation under Domestication," pp. 9-23
Chapt. II, "Variation under Nature," pp. 24-31
Chapt. III, "Struggle for Existence," pp. 32-39
Chapt. IV, "Natural Selection; or the Survival of the Fittest," pp. 40-64
Chapt. V, "Laws of Variation," pp. 65-79
Chapt. VI, "Difficulties of the Theory," pp. 80-98
Chapt. XV, "Recapitulation and Conclusion," pp. 230-243

The great theory of human evolution from lower forms of life. Once so controversial that as recently as a few decades ago some school systems forbade its being taught because it allegedly denied the biblical creation of man. Now generally accepted in fundamental concept as an account of man's *physical,* not his specifically human or spiritual, development in the chain of organisms. Eminently suitable for all high-school students as a classic example of scientific theory.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